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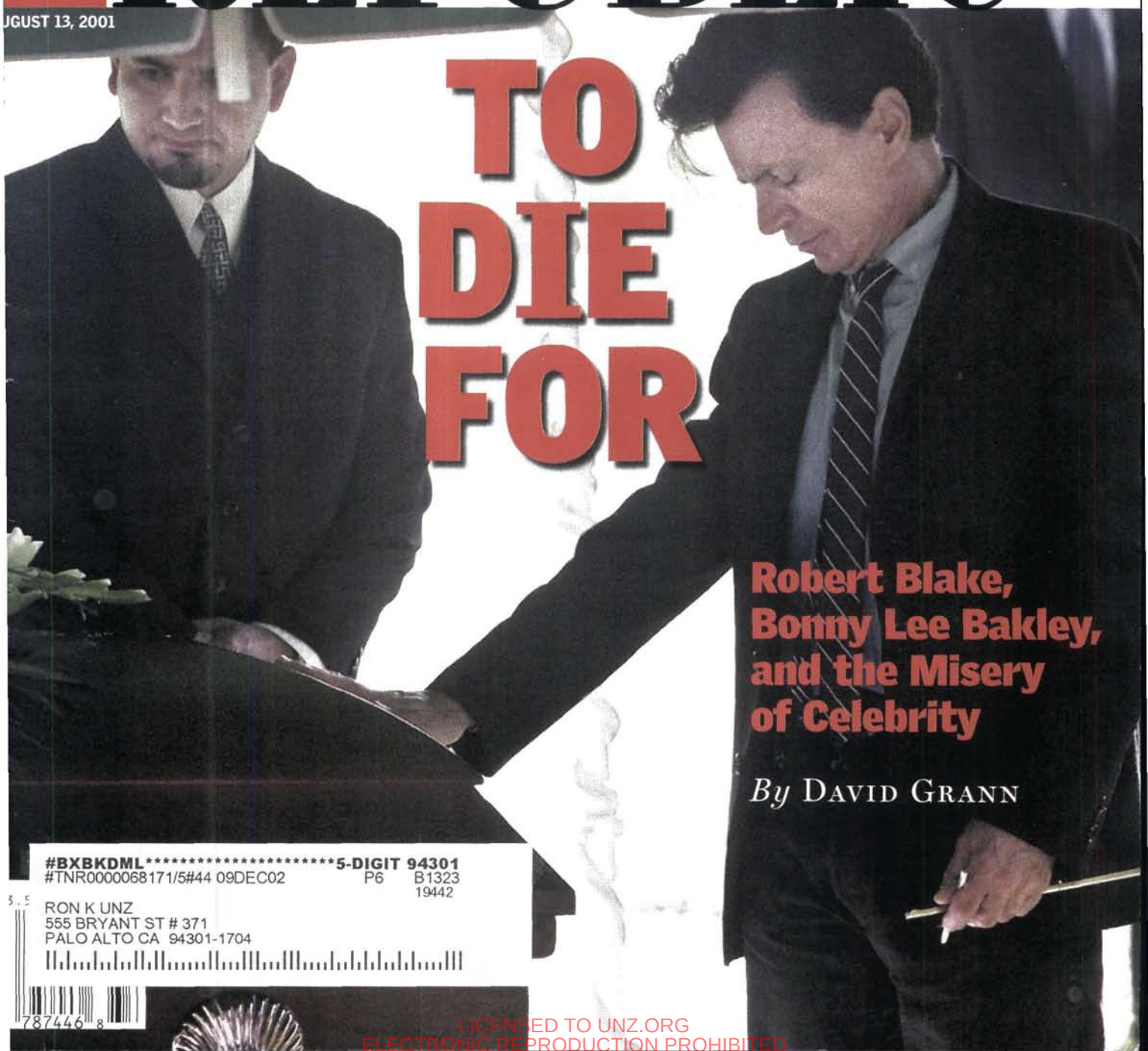

TO DIE FOR

Robert Blake, Bonny Lee Bakley, and the Misery of Celebrity

By DAVID GRANN

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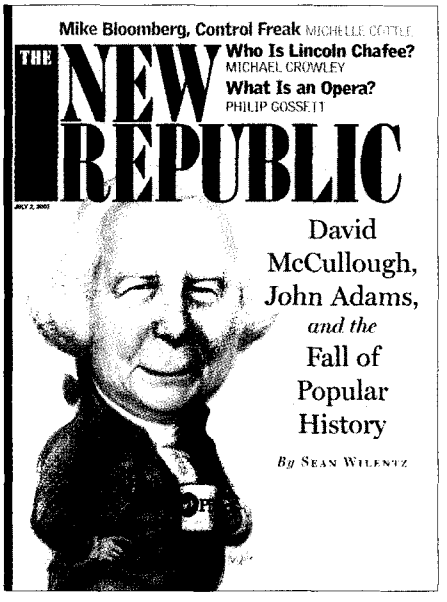
CORRESPONDENCE

Unpopular

TO THE EDITORS:

Here I am, editing a magazine devoted to American history, and there are days when this occupation can feel like yelling into the void. So on one level it's actually a bit bracing to learn from Sean Wilentz ("America Made Easy," July 2) that *American Heritage* is responsible for nothing less than what your issue's cover heralds as the "Fall of Popular History" in the second half of the twentieth century. According to Wilentz, this is how it happened: During the 1950s "[Bernard] DeVoto's style of seriousness [was] eclipsed by the more journalistic and sentimentally descriptive style of *American Heritage*, whose influence is everywhere." Then, our vast seminal destructive force spent, we settled into an amiable fatuity, "producing every month a quirky grab bag of fascinating but undemanding features on everything from (as in one recent issue) the history of the voting machine, Americans' centuries-old love affair with Venice, and the rise and fall of the Oldsmobile." The sort of piffle we publish, moreover, characterizes a sunny and simplistic view of our national past inaugurated by *American Heritage*'s founding editor, Bruce Catton. It diverged from the darker, more mordant, more complex view held by another popular historian of the day, DeVoto; and it was seductive enough to have kept readers in its thrall ever since. David McCullough, Wilentz continues, "is the most accomplished practitioner" of the *American Heritage* "style"—"popular history as passive nostalgic spectacle" marching "under the banner of 'narrative'"—but he is by no means "the only culprit, nor is he the worst": That would be Ken Burns. McCullough and Burns need no defending by me (nor, alas, can *American Heritage* fairly claim credit for their work, although I'll happily embrace the idea that we helped foment the climate in which it flourishes). But I would like to say a little about *American Heritage* magazine itself.

Since its founding in 1954, this magazine has never taken an overly sentimentalized or simplistic view of the past. Those Wilentz calls the "few" nonacademic historians "who upheld DeVoto's analytical and literary standards, including Catherine Drinker Bowen, Fawn Brodie, and Shelby Foote" have all written for it, as has DeVoto himself. It is a magazine addressed to a lay audience and thus it has the usual fixtures—columns, picture stories, and so forth—and a variety of topics, some of greater consequence than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David McCullough, John Adams, and the Fall of Popular History
By Sean Wilentz

others. Wilentz's representative sampling of our articles is disingenuous—he could equally well have chosen Louis Menand's essay on the pragmatists, or the new evidence we published about Leo Frank's lynching, or Nicholas Lemann challenging Dinesh D'Souza on the history of race in America—but, although his selection is meant to suggest vapidity, I think that each of the stories he cites reflects the magazine's virtues. The Oldsmobile makes its appearance in John Steele Gordon's regular column about business history as an example of how General Motors' Alfred Sloan changed America's view of the automobile from transportation to object of desire, and of the worst possible consequences of a single advertising campaign. Surely the problem of our voting machines is not a wholly whimsical subject for an article commissioned, as this one was, in the wake of the most recent presidential election. And the story on America's "love affair"—Wilentz's phrase, and one we were careful to avoid—with Venice is by John Lukacs, who is among the most eminent of living historians and whose work nobody has ever called simplistic, or sentimental, or undemanding.

RICHARD F. SNOW
Editor-in-Chief
American Heritage
New York, New York

SEAN WILENTZ REPLIES:

Richard F. Snow's whimsical sarcasm will get him nowhere. Yelling into the void? *American Heritage*'s circulation is 340,000, more than three times that of THE NEW REPUBLIC. Sure, Snow's magazine has sometimes run, and continues to run, articles by admirable writers like Bernard DeVoto and John Lukacs. But can he say, with a straight face, that his slick magazine has ever made a habit of publishing anything close to their best or most demanding work?

I didn't say that *American Heritage* is "sunny." Nobody, not even David McCullough or Ken Burns, can take a resolutely sunny view of our past and get away with it anymore. But the magazine is simplistic and sentimental; and its simplifications and sentimentality—about ideas, politics, our national tragedies, and our national triumphs—are directly responsible for the current abysmal state of popular history. Perhaps Snow hasn't read McCullough's recent remark that *American Heritage* was his "graduate school." Or perhaps Snow takes pride in it. Does Snow really not see that he is publishing a slick magazine? My guess is that most people look at *American Heritage* only for the piety and the pictures. A historian of my acquaintance recently remarked that a word is worth a thousand pictures. *American Heritage* plainly takes the more conventional view. The cover of its current issue displays Jane Fonda ("MS. AMERICA: WHY JANE FONDA IS A MIRROR OF THE NATION'S PAST 40 YEARS"). Q.E.D.

Divide

TO THE EDITORS:

The problem with the term Asian American ("Reorientation," by Franklin Foer, July 2) is that it does not include Americans of Asian descent whose ancestry is Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and so on. I don't see why people from China, Japan, and Korea should be grouped together, since these countries have historical animosity toward each other, distinct languages, and distinct cultures. But unless the term Asian American is used to refer to all people of Asian ancestry, I strongly object to its usage.

DEVBANI RAHA
Denver, Colorado

Mourning Millie

TO THE EDITORS:

Strangely, amid a stream of sympathy cards, I find comfort and solace in a journal of opinion. I have just read Jerome Groopman's review of *Saving Milly: Love, Politics, and Parkinson's Disease*, by Morton Kondracke ("Job's Doctors," July 2). On June 18, I lost my Millie. Like Kondracke's Milly, she was a beautiful creature of common clay. I thank Groopman for giving us a poignant sharing of the Kondracke experience.

CHARLES T. MAIOLANI
Traverse City, Michigan

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Unveiled

IN THE DECADE or so in which same-sex marriage has been a matter of public debate, several arguments against it have been abandoned. Some opponents initially claimed marriage was about children and so gays couldn't marry. But courts made the obvious point that childless heterosexuals can marry and so the comparison was moot. Others said a change in the definition of marriage would inexorably lead to legal polygamy. But homosexuals weren't asking for the right to marry *anyone*. They were asking for the right to marry *someone*. Still others worried that if one state granted such a right, the entire country would have to accept same-sex marriage. But legal scholars pointed out that marriage has not historically been one of those legal judgments that the "full faith and credit" clause of the U.S. Constitution says must be recognized in every state if they are valid in one state. And if there were any doubt, the Defense of Marriage Act, designed expressly to prohibit such a scenario, was passed by a Republican Congress and President Clinton in 1996.

None of this stopped the Vermont Supreme Court, legislature, and governor from establishing "civil unions," the euphemism for gay marriage in the Ben & Jerry's state. It's been almost exactly a year since civil unions debuted, and social collapse doesn't seem imminent. Perhaps panicked by this nonevent, the social right last month launched a Federal Marriage Amendment, which would bar any state from enacting same-sex marriage, forbid any arrangement designed to give gays equal marriage benefits, and destroy any conceivable claim that conservatives truly believe in states' rights. Even some movement conservatives—most notably *The Washington Times*—demurred. *The Wall Street Journal* ran its only op-ed on the matter in opposition.

Perhaps concerned that their movement is sputtering, the opponents of same-sex marriage have turned to new arguments. Stanley Kurtz, the sharpest and fairest of these critics, summed up the case last week in *National Review Online*. For Kurtz and other cultural conservatives, the deepest issue is sex and sexual difference. "Marriage," Kurtz argues, "springs directly from the ethos of heterosexual sex. Once marriage loses its connection to the differences between men and women, it can only start to resemble a glorified and slightly less temporary version of hooking up."

Let's unpack this. Kurtz's premise is that men and women differ in their sexual-emotional makeup. Men want sex more than stability; women want stability more than sex. Heterosexual marriage is therefore some kind of truce in the sex wars. One side gives sex in return for stability; the other provides stability in return for sex. Both sides benefit, children most of all. Since marriage is defined as the way women tame men, once one gender is missing, this taming institution will cease to work. So, in Kurtz's words, a "world of same-sex marriages is a world of no-strings heterosexual hookups and 50 percent divorce rates."

But isn't this backward? Surely the world of no-strings heterosexual hookups and 50 percent divorce rates *preceded* gay marriage. It was heterosexuals in the 1970s who changed marriage into something more like a partnership between equals, with both partners often working and gender roles less rigid than in the past. All homosexuals are saying, three decades later, is that, under the current definition, there's no reason to exclude us. If you want to return straight marriage to the 1950s, go ahead. But until you do, the exclusion of gays is simply an anomaly—and a denial of basic civil equality.

The deeper worry is that gay men simply can't hack monogamy and that any weakening of fidelity in the Clinton-Condit era is too big a risk to take with a vital social institution. One big problem with this argument is that it completely ignores lesbians. So far in Vermont there have been almost twice as many lesbian civil unions as gay male ones—even though most surveys show that gay men outnumber lesbians about two to one. That means lesbians are up to four times more likely to get married than gay men—unsurprising if you buy Kurtz's understanding of male and female sexuality. So if you accept the premise that women are far more monogamous than men, and that therefore lesbian marriages are more likely to be monogamous than even heterosexual ones, the net result of lesbian marriage rights is clearly a gain in monogamy, not a loss. For social conservatives, what's not to like?

But the conservatives are wrong when it comes to gay men as well. Gay men—not because they're gay but because they are men in an all-male subculture—are almost certainly more sexually active with more partners than most straight men. (Straight men would be far more promiscuous, I think, if they could get away with it the way gay guys can.) Many gay men value this sexual freedom more than the stresses and strains of monogamous marriage (and I don't blame them). But this is not true of *all* gay men. Many actually yearn for social stability, for anchors for their relationships, for the family support and financial security that come with marriage. To deny this is surely to engage in the "soft bigotry of low expectations." They may be a minority at the moment. But with legal marriage, their numbers would surely grow. And they would function as emblems in gay culture of a sexual life linked to stability and love.

So what's the catch? I guess the catch would be if those gay male couples interpret marriage as something in which monogamy is optional. But given the enormous step in gay culture that marriage represents, and given that marriage is entirely voluntary, I see no reason why gay male marriages shouldn't be at least as monogamous as straight ones. Perhaps those of us in the marriage movement need to stress the link between gay marriage and monogamy more clearly. We need to show how renunciation of sexual freedom in an all-male world can be an even greater statement of commitment than among straights. I don't think this is as big a stretch as it sounds. In Denmark, where de facto gay marriage has existed for some time, the rate of marriage among gays is far lower than among straights, but, perhaps as a result, the gay divorce rate is just over one-fifth that of heterosexuals. And, during the first six years in which gay marriage was legal, scholar Darren Spedale has found, the rate of straight marriages rose 10 percent, and the rate of straight divorces decreased by 12 percent. In the only country where we have real data on the impact of gay marriage, the net result has clearly been a conservative one.

When you think about it, this makes sense. Within gay subculture, marriage would not be taken for granted. It's likely to attract older, more mainstream gay couples, its stabilizing ripples spreading through both the subculture and the wider society. Because such marriages would integrate a long-isolated group of people into the world of love and family, they would also help heal the psychic wounds that scar so many gay people and their families. Far from weakening heterosexual marriage, gay marriage would, I bet, help strengthen it, as the culture of marriage finally embraces all citizens. How sad that some conservatives still cannot see that. How encouraging that, in such a short time, so many others have begun to understand.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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Benefits of the Doubt

WHEN PRESIDENT BUSH'S Social Security commission released its preliminary report last week, Democrats took to it like lions to a wounded antelope. And why not? There's plenty of juicy flesh to tear through. Democrats can honestly tell the voters that the plan represents a first step toward complete privatization, ending Social Security as we know it. (Bush accidentally admitted as much on the campaign trail.) They can say the president wants to cut benefits beyond what is necessary to save the program and that he's exaggerating Social Security's fiscal woes to foist a radical solution upon the public. And, if a populist pitch strikes their fancy, they can even argue that Bush is promoting his plan in conjunction with Wall Street, which is lobbying for the plan and stands to gain billions in commissions if private accounts become law.

What Democrats cannot in good conscience do is deny that Social Security needs fixing. And, unfortunately, some in the party's liberal wing are doing just that. Labor demonstrators picketed the commission a week ago for even considering a hike in the retirement age. "Its members," House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt piled on, "are trying to undermine public confidence in Social Security and scare people into thinking we have no choice but to cut benefits." There's a reason Democrats say this: It works politically. But the truth is that Social Security does require reform, and, in the long run, lying about that will only make it easier for Bush or his successors to privatize Social Security in the name of saving it.

The honest case against Bush's commission begins with the recognition that Social Security really does face a long-term financial shortfall. Part of the deficit can be reduced with technical fixes (such as bringing exempted state and local government workers into the system) and part by pumping surplus income tax revenues into the system. But that won't fully solve the problem, and there's a limit to how much of the federal budget should be devoted to one program, however valuable it is. That leaves benefit cuts as the only alternative. For instance, raise the age at which workers become eligible for retirement (perhaps with exceptions for physically taxing work). Or tinker with the current formula to reduce benefits across the board. Such steps wouldn't be politically easy, but they wouldn't be terribly painful, either. It's true, as Democrats point out, that if current assumptions hold, Social Security won't have to reduce benefits until 2038. But the longer we put off those reductions, the deeper they will ultimately have to be. There's no principled reason why tomorrow's beneficiaries should bear all the burden of cutbacks while today's beneficiaries bear none.

Once Democrats admit the need to eventually reduce benefits, they will be free to attack the central dishonesty being peddled by the self-styled truth-tellers on Bush's commission, a lie enshrined in the group's name: the Commission to Strengthen Social Security. The purpose of the commission isn't to strengthen Social Security, or to "save" it, but to privatize it—which means close to the opposite. Bush's commission portrays private accounts as a way to keep the program out of the red, but the truth is that every tax dollar drained away into private accounts is one fewer dollar available to pay guaranteed benefits. In other words, setting up private accounts does not fix the insolvency problem; it worsens it—requiring *larger* benefit cuts than would otherwise be necessary.

The real purpose of Bush's commission isn't fiscal but ideological—to transfer the risk of providing for one's nonworking years from the government to the individual. This contravenes the entire purpose of Social Security, which is exactly the point. The most enthusiastic privatizers—including the staffers charged with formulating Bush's plan—would prefer it if Social Security didn't exist at all and see private accounts as the first step to abolishing it.

Rather than offer a straightforward ideological critique of Social Security—which most privatizers recognize as political suicide—Bush's commission attempts to obscure the choices at hand by piously insisting that only it has the courage to propose the changes needed to save the program. That's why Democrats have to avoid stepping into the trap. If they oppose privatization on the grounds that all benefit cuts are wrong, they allow the administration to frame the choice as one between privatizing the system and letting it go broke. In the short run, such an argument might win the Democrats some congressional seats. But in the long run, it concedes the reformist high ground to the privatizers—a high ground they emphatically do not deserve. ■

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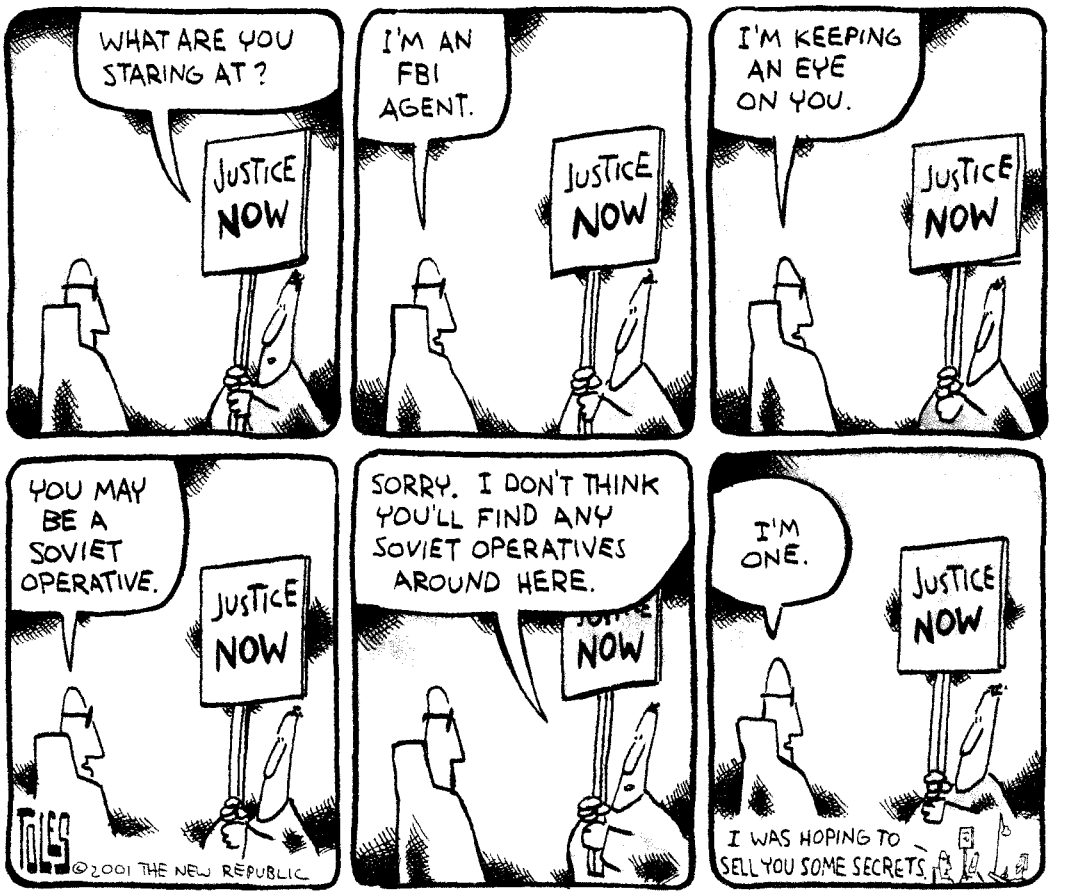
NOTEBOOK

THE BEST DEFENSE...: Back in June, Republicans bashed Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle for scheduling a debate on a patients' bill of rights before the Senate considered a midyear defense-spending bill needed to keep Pentagon operations running smoothly. Daschle was "play[ing] politics with the lives, welfare and safety of 1.3 million soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and their families," Oliver North charged in *The Washington Times*. The majority leader was "holding our nation's security and our armed forces hostage," added Minority Leader Trent Lott. Daschle offered to delay the Senate's Fourth of July recess in order to consider the bill, but his patriotic Republican colleagues demurred, and so the South Dakotan quickly passed the bill as soon as the recess ended. When the House and Senate wrapped up their conference a week later, Daschle promptly scheduled a final vote for the following Monday, July 23. The previous Friday, July 20, Vice President Dick Cheney placed an urgent personal call to Daschle, warning that the Senate needed to send the bill to the president before the weekend or else risk "dire consequences," such as the immediate cessation of military exercises, according to a Daschle aide. So Daschle complied, and the Senate passed the bill by voice vote that very day. Imagine the Democratic leader's surprise when he saw George W. Bush, live on CNN, brandishing the bill before cheering American troops in Kosovo—*four days later.* ("I'm going to do something unusual.... I'm going to sign it here because it contains $1.9 billion for pay, benefits, and health care," Bush gloated.) Cheney's office later blamed the delay on the need to fly the bill to Bush, already abroad when it was passed, by commercial jet. No word yet on whether Lott feels that TWA was "holding our nation's security and our armed forces hostage."

WRONG TRACK: Ever since he took over the AFL-CIO in 1995, John Sweeney has dreamed aloud about a House Speaker Dick Gephardt. Last campaign cycle, labor spent $70 million on Democratic candidates; in May, Sweeney told the Associated Press that Democratic victories are "our main goal." Lately, though, it seems that "main goal" may have been put on the back burner. Last week, the Federation ran ads in 19 congressional districts, pressuring House members to deny President Bush "fast track" authority for negotiating trade agreements. Of the 19 targeted members, at least seven are Democrats from highly competitive districts—incumbents for whom any depressed Democratic turnout could be devastating. (One of those targeted is California's Cal Dooley, who has been trying to add labor and environmental protections that are currently nonexistent in the fast-track bill.) Labor has been down this road before, and the results weren't pretty. During the 1994 congressional debate over NAFTA, the union ran ads against wavering reps that evoked pretty much the same grim scenarios of "losing jobs," "dirty air, dirty water," and "unsafe food on our shelves." And after the spots, union members stayed away from the polls in droves, and Democrats lost in droves. Or, as Sweeney himself has put it, "[O]ur members, after NAFTA, didn't vote at all." Last time, the result was Newt Gingrich's wildly anti-labor Republican revolution. This time ... well, perhaps we'll find out next year.

FARM RAID: In 1996 Congress passed a major farm bill that was supposed to finally phase out the market-distorting (or, as Newt Gingrich liked to say, "East German socialist") federal subsidies given to the nation's farmers. But the bill's real effect seems to have been to create an absurd annual ritual in which Congress makes up for the 1996 cuts


WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT?
JUSTICE NOW
I'M AN FBI AGENT.
JUSTICE NOW
I'M KEEPING AN EYE ON YOU.
JUSTICE NOW
YOU MAY BE A SOVIET OPERATIVE.
JUSTICE NOW
TOLES ©2001 THE NEW REPUBLIC
SORRY. I DON'T THINK YOU'LL FIND ANY SOVIET OPERATIVES AROUND HERE.
NOW
I'M ONE.
JUSTICE NOW
I WAS HOPING TO SELL YOU SOME SECRETS

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by doling out huge subsidies—lavishly garnished with pork—under the rubric of "emergency" spending. Senate Democrats especially distinguished themselves this week by preparing to approve, over the White House's objections, $7.5 billion in such spending. Republicans howled that the bill exceeded budget limits by $2 billion. And they noted, accurately, that much of it goes to decidedly nonurgent items such as expanding subsidies for paper reduction in school lunch programs, adding money to the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Pilot Program, making cities of 50,000 eligible for rural loan programs and credits, and paying raises to Department of Agriculture workers. The bill also includes hefty sums for conservation programs such as wetlands protection. Of course, Republicans are hardly blameless themselves. Much of the $5.5 billion in spending they *were* willing to accept consisted of agriculture subsidies that should have been nearly abolished by now; the 1996 bill envisioned an end to all subsidies by next year. East German socialism, it seems, retains considerable bipartisan appeal.

SPIN THE BOTTLE OPENER: "Women said that after a hook up they often felt awkward and sometimes felt hurt.... A notable feature of hook ups is that they almost always occur when both participants are drinking or drunk."—"Hooking Up, Hanging Out, and Hoping for Mr. Right: College Women on Dating and Mating Today," a study commissioned by the Independent Women's Forum, released last week and posted on the website of its campus project, Shethinks.org

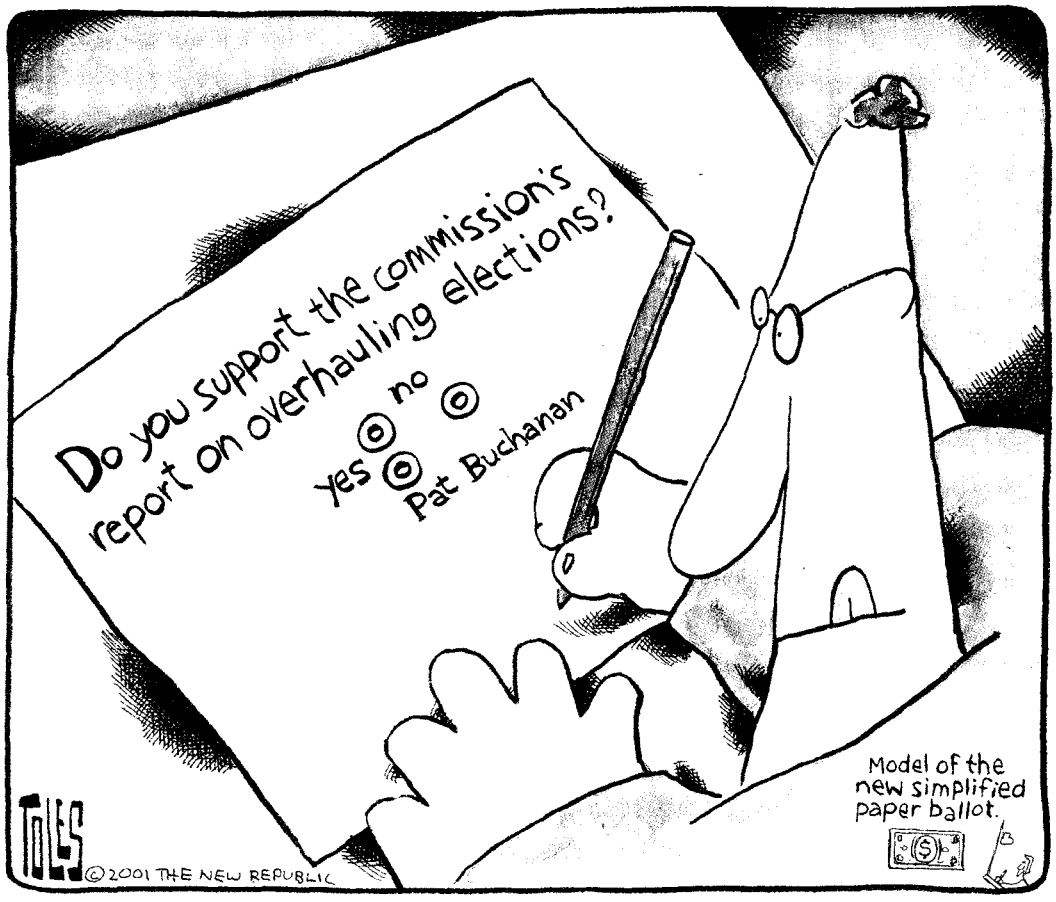
"We were thinking of how we can brand the name Shethinks.org and we were thinking about what appeals to college students."—IWF campus projects manager Kate Kennedy, explaining the group's decision to distribute bottle openers bearing the Shethinks.org logo

BUT HOW WOULD ROUSSEAU FEEL?: "This is not about cockfighting. It's about the proper role of the federal government.... John Locke, Montesquieu, and Patrick Henry would have said to leave policing chickens to state and local officials, and I do, too."—Georgia Senator Zell Miller, arguing against federal legislation that would outlaw transporting live chickens across state lines for cockfighting

SIGNS OF THE TIMESES: "IN HARLEM, A HERO'S WELCOME FOR NEW NEIGHBOR CLINTON"—front-page headline, *The New York Times*, July 31

"CLINTON OFFICE OPENING NOT A BLOCKBUSTER EVENT: HARLEM AMBIVALENT ABOUT NEW TENANT"—front-page headline, *The Washington Times*, same day

FOX'S NEVER-ENDING QUEST FOR BALANCE: "We've just put them on to get another opinion, another side of the story."—Bill Shine, executive producer of prime-time programming for Fox News, explaining the network's controversial decision to put psychics on the air to discuss missing intern Chandra Levy



DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS: Franklin Foer's article on the Democratic Party's pursuit of the rural vote ("It Takes a Village," August 6) misstated Al Gore's overall share of the suburban vote. It was 47 percent. Also, TNR failed to note that Lawrence Lessig, author of "Antitrust and Verify" (July 23), had served as special master in the Justice Department's antitrust case against Microsoft Corporation in 1998. ■

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White House Watch

In the Tank

By Ryan Lizza

If you want to follow President Bush's Commission to Strengthen Social Security, by far the best place to go is *www.socialsecurity.org*. When the commission met on June 11 and July 24, the website recorded and broadcast the sessions. The site offers a veritable library of data outlining the administration's arguments for individual accounts. An hour before the commission had even ended its first meeting, *socialsecurity.org* issued a press release praising its work. And last week, when the commission released its interim report on the program's fiscal health, it was available on *socialsecurity.org* long before it reached a bare-bones rival site, *www.csss.gov*. Which is strange, because *csss.gov* is the commission's official website. By contrast, *socialsecurity.org* is run by the Cato Institute.

The Cato Institute, for those not familiar with its work, is the most radical major think tank in Washington, an institution dedicated to a libertarianism so pure it would make Dick Armey blanch. Cato's latest 680-page "Handbook for Congress" advises Congress to eliminate the Departments of Commerce, Energy, Agriculture, Interior, Veterans Affairs, Transportation, and Education; to "prohibit new entrants to the welfare rolls"; and to "end all federal early education and child care subsidies and programs." For good measure, it also calls for disbanding the IRS, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Small Business Administration, and some 200 other agencies and programs. Cato opposes any limits on campaign contributions and wants America to withdraw from the International Monetary Fund. A strict reading of the handbook even suggests impeaching President Bush because he did not receive a congressional declaration of war before bombing Iraq earlier this year.

Not surprisingly, these stands have put the 24-year-old think tank at odds with much of the Bush administration's agenda. Cato staffers called Vice President Dick Cheney's energy plan "pregnant with economic mischief," the education bill an embarrassment, the tax cut "anemic," and the faith-based initiative "one of the worst ideas ever conceived by the federal government." But on Social Security, Cato and the White House think and act as one. For the White House, Cato is an indispensable source of expertise—with two decades of pro-privatization research and lobbying under its belt, it knows more about the issue than just about anyone else in Washington. For Cato, this is the moment the think tank has been awaiting for years: the chance to privatize the largest government program in the world. There's just one danger: If the public thinks Cato is really running the commission, the crusade to privatize Social Security is probably dead.

Cato's connection to Bush began in Texas back in September 1997. Ed Crane, Cato's founder and president, and José Piñera, co-chair of the institution's privatization project, were in Dallas for a Cato-sponsored seminar on pension privatization. Both men are privatization veterans. Crane has made it a Cato priority ever since he founded the institution, publishing one of the first-ever pieces on the topic in 1979. "We've been working on it for twenty years. We've put out more work on it than any other think tank," Crane says. For his part, Piñera is a virtual legend among privatizers, having served as labor minister in the Chilean government responsible for that country's move to pension privatization. Two Bush financial supporters—Crane insists he can't remember their names—attended the event and were so impressed with Piñera that they asked him and Crane to have dinner with the governor in Austin that night. After dinner, over brandy and cigars in the library of the governor's mansion, Piñera explained his experience in Chile, and Crane laid out Cato's case for privatization in the United States. Bush said he agreed with them but worried about campaigning on the issue. Crane reassured him, arguing that the issue was losing its salience as a Democratic bludgeon. "I think that was where [Bush] began to think about this seriously in terms of his future campaign," says Michael Tanner, director of Cato's privatization project. Private accounts eventually became one of the cornerstones of Bush's campaign.

So it's probably not surprising that Bush's Social Security commission has raided the Massachusetts Avenue think tank for much of its staff. Andrew Biggs, Tanner's assistant for Cato's Project on Social Security Privatization, is now a staff member for Bush's commission and helped write its recently released draft report. Randy Clerihue left his job as press secretary at Cato to become the commission's official spokesman. Commission members Tim Penny and Sam Beard are members of Cato's privatization advisory board. Carolyn Weaver, who was appointed to the commission by Bush but recently resigned for personal reasons, authored the original 1979 Cato article on privatization. John Cogan, a Bush economic adviser, and Thomas Saving, both commission members, are signatories of Cato's Social Security petition, a privatization manifesto signed by a who's who of the movement.

Since its founding on May 2, the Bush commission's work has been almost indistinguishable from Cato's policy papers. In fact, with its less technical language and virtually identical arguments and examples, the commission's recent report represents a kind of Cliffs Notes for the Cato case that Social Security is broken in a way only privatization can fix. Consider some similarities between the July 18 report and an October 2000 Cato paper, written by Biggs, called "Social Security: Is It 'A Crisis That Doesn't Exist?'" To explain what's wrong with the Social Security trust fund, Biggs seizes on an obscure sentence from Bill Clinton's 2000 budget: "The Clinton administration provides in its fiscal

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Privatization: A Solution for School Inequities?

ohn E. Chubb is chief ucation officer, Edison chools; distinguished isiting fellow, Hoover stitution; and member, over's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

Economically disadvantaged students suffer a number of financial inequities in public education. The school districts in which poor children live often have fewer tax dollars to spend on education than do districts in which middle-class children live. Poorer districts also tend to pay lower teacher salaries than richer districts and have difficulty attracting and retaining teachers. These inequities have recently been challenged in the courts, and states are finding ways to mitigate some of these imbalances.

But other inequities continue. One is the tendency for disadvantaged students to be served by the largest and most bureaucratized school systems. School systems serving more than 100,000 students have disproportionate numbers of poor and minority students. These same systems are plagued by the inefficiencies of public bureaucracy, meaning not only that disadvantaged students have less spent on their education than their more advantaged neighbors but that the money tends to be spent less efficiently.

Another inequity occurs *within* school systems. **The least experienced teachers tend to teach in the schools with the highest concentrations of disadvantaged students.** Most public school systems honor seniority when deciding which teachers to hire. Teachers prefer to teach in schools where student behavior is good, student turnover is low, and parental involvement is high. Thus, problem schools tend to have the most teaching vacancies, which are filled by inexperienced teachers. Because new teachers are paid less than veteran teachers, inequities in staffing bring inequities in funding: schools with disadvantaged students receive less of every district dollar than schools with advantaged students because teachers in schools serving poor kids cost less.

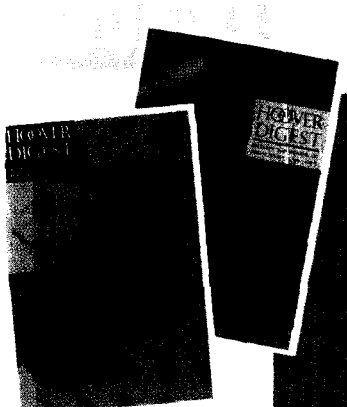
Privatization could go a long way toward correcting these inequities. First, if private school management firms contract with the largest and most bureaucratized school systems, disadvantaged students will benefit disproportionately from more efficient uses of their education dollars. Second, if private management firms work in the poorest areas and are paid for their services what the *district* spends per pupil, privatization will increase the funding available to disadvantaged students.

Evidence suggests that private firms are working as equalizers. Most of the private management firms now operating public schools have focused on charter schools, which in general serve disproportionately poor and minority populations in urban areas and by law receive per pupil funding equal to local district averages.

As for traditional public schools, only Edison Schools, among private firms, is doing substantial contracting with school districts. But this is changing. Fourteen firms submitted proposals to New York City in August 2000 to manage the lowest performing schools in the school system. Several companies have responded to requests for proposals from Kansas City, Missouri, to the state of Maryland for school management of large school systems and highly disadvantaged schools and students. Edison's 110 schools, for example, include contracts with Dallas, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Miami, and Wichita. The students in Edison schools are disproportionately needy: 65 percent are eligible for reduced price lunches; 55 percent are African American, and 17 percent are Hispanic or Latino. If Edison's experience is an indicator, privatization could be an important equalizer in public education.

— *John E. Chubb*

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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year 2000 budget perhaps the clearest statement of what the trust fund can and cannot do: '[Trust fund] balances are available to finance future benefit payments ... but only in a bookkeeping sense.'" The commission finds the passage similarly useful: "The Clinton administration's fiscal year 2000 budget made the point succinctly: 'These [trust fund] balances are available to finance future benefit payments and other Trust Fund expenditures—but only in a bookkeeping sense.'" Similarly, Biggs notes, "[T]he Concord Coalition points out that, 'in 1960, there were more than 5.1 workers per beneficiary. Today the ratio is three to one.'" The Social Security commission report notes, "In 1960, there were more than five workers paying into Social Security for every individual collecting benefits. Today, demographic changes have reduced the worker-to-retiree ratio to 3.4-to-1." Biggs notes, "A Congressional Budget Office survey ... says, 'The Social Security system most likely has had a negative impact on private saving.'" The commission makes exactly the same point: "A Congressional Budget Office study concluded 'the Social Security system most likely has had a negative impact on private saving.'" And Biggs's paper includes a section headlined "If Economic Growth Exceeds Projections, Will It Save Social Security?" The commission report wonders in a sidebar: "Will Faster Economic Growth Avert the Problem?" (Both—surprise!—say no.)

And Cato doesn't only provide the commission with policy analysis; it offers a road map on political strategy as well. The White House's argument that Social Security is particularly unfair to blacks and women, which made headlines when unveiled recently by Bush economic adviser Larry Lindsey, can be found nearly point by point on Cato's privatization website. "Women are disproportionately dependent on Social Security in retirement," says Cato. "[W]omen are disproportionately dependent on Social Security for retirement income," echoes the commission.

CATO, NOT SURPRISINGLY, is enjoying its newfound power. The think tank's weekly Social Security newsletter trumpets its access and influence. One recent headline bragged, "ANOTHER CATO STAFFER GOES TO COMMISSION," and another issue proudly noted that commission co-chairs Patrick Moynihan and Richard Parsons are "echoing positions long argued by the Cato Institute." But while such headlines might be good for Cato, they're probably not good for the White House. Already, Bob Matsui, the California congressman spearheading the Democrats' anti-privatization response, has warned that the commissioners could become "tools of the Cato Institute." Cato's privatizers have a sly rebuttal: Their ideological extremism, they say, will actually help the president by making him look reasonable. "We're talking about full privatization, and any plan that the commission comes up with is going to be somewhat moderate compared to our position," says Tanner, who refers to Social Security as "a cancer" in the Cato handbook. "So the White House could always triangulate off of us. That's a good thing." Except, perhaps, if the public realizes that the triangulation strategy is a Cato production too. ■

On the Hill

Teddy Bear

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

WHEN JIM JEFFORDS defected from the GOP in May, flipping the Senate to the Democrats, few things horrified Republicans more than the prospect of Ted Kennedy with a committee gavel in his hands. "Ted Kennedy is the biggest liberal in the world!" shrieked columnist Cal Thomas on Fox News. Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum sent out a panicky fund-raising letter warning that "Ted Kennedy ... and the rest of the radical liberal Democrats" were back in control: "This is a nightmare come true!" Republican operatives set out to tar vulnerable Democrats with the Kennedy name in preparation for the 2002 elections. The executive director of the Georgia GOP declared that Georgia Senator Max Cleland "worships at the shrine of Ted Kennedy."

But it's not quite the shrine it once was. In recent years, Kennedy has been spending less time hurling grenades from his side of the aisle and more time wheeling and dealing across it—joining with former Kansas Republican Nancy Kassebaum on a 1996 bill making health insurance portable and with Utah's Orrin Hatch the following year on legislation raising cigarette taxes to pay for children's medical care. So when George W. Bush came to town with big ideas about one of the Massachusetts senator's pet issues—education—it wasn't surprising that the putative liberal zealot spent long hours calmly negotiating with the White House. In the end, Kennedy brokered the compromise the Senate passed in June.

Kennedy compromised so much, in fact, that something strange has transpired. With negotiations over the bill's final form beginning between the House and the Senate this month, conservatives are suddenly invoking Kennedy as a voice of reason, while Kennedy's liberal colleagues are cursing his name and fighting to reverse one of his key concessions. "Kennedy doesn't give a shit about kids," fumes one left-leaning lobbyist. Marvels Kennedy spokesman Jim Manley: "The politics of this are unlike anything I've ever seen."

Kennedy's heresy was to accept a little-publicized Bush proposal known as "Academic Achievement for All," or "Straight A's." The program would give states new flexibility in spending federal education dollars, which are currently earmarked for hundreds of specific purposes. For instance, a school district with plenty of laptop computers could take money Congress has earmarked for technology and spend it on textbooks instead. In exchange, states that receive the extra flexibility would promise extra-fast improvements in their schools' test scores.

Long a favorite of conservative school reformers like Chester Finn and the Heritage Foundation, Straight A's has

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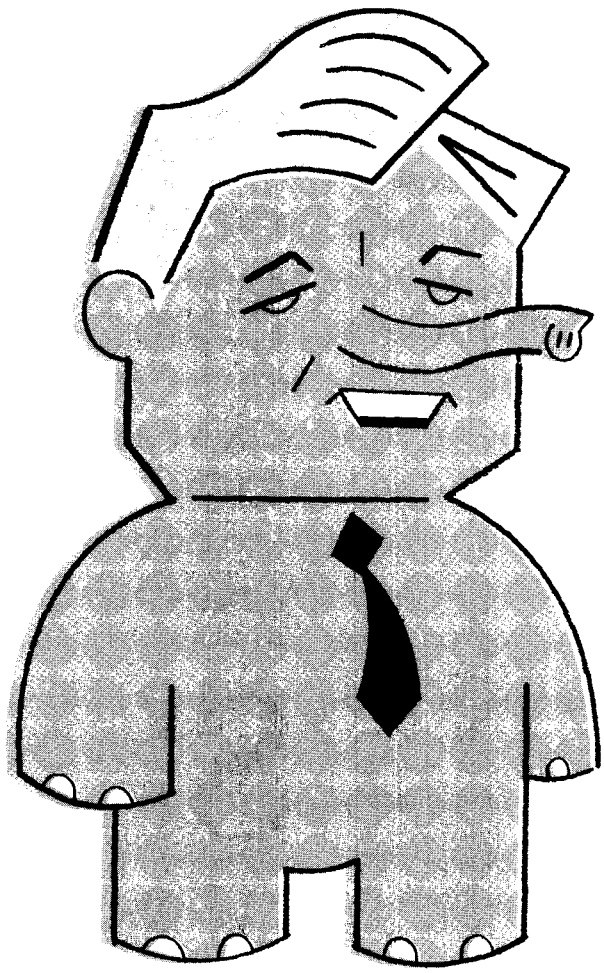
become something of an obsession among federalist-minded Republicans on Capitol Hill. Not surprisingly, it is anathema to most congressional Democrats and their interest-group allies, particularly teachers' unions. Some of this opposition stems from vanity: Many of these politicians and activists worked for years to secure the earmarks that Straight A's would let states ignore. But the liberals have a philosophical argument, too. State-level flexibility, they say, would undermine Washington's ability to ensure that poor school districts aren't shortchanged—a safeguard states have shown they won't provide on their own. As one powerful Democratic senator put it last year, Straight A's is "bad education policy" and "too extreme." Schools, this senator warned, might blow the cash on "fads and gimmicks," perhaps even "the football team ... computer games ... [or] new office furniture."

That senator was Ted Kennedy. So what changed? Presidential administrations, for one thing. Kennedy could afford to take a hard line as long as Bill Clinton and his veto pen were around to keep troublesome legislation off the books. Once Bush took over, Kennedy realized that major school reform was on the way—with or without his input. At first it appeared Kennedy might play only a small role. Although Bush seemed to be courting Kennedy—most memorably with a private White House screening of the movie *Thirteen Days*—the administration was doing its serious negotiating with moderate Senate Democrats like Evan Bayh and Joe Lieberman. Aware he was in danger of being shut out, Kennedy made it clear to the White House that he was at least as open to compromise as were his centrist colleagues. Ultimately, Kennedy became the chief Democratic architect of the education bill that passed the Senate, a bill that included the testing and the accountability at the heart of Bush's plan.



But it also included Straight A's, to the collective dismay of Democrats. Even some moderates were aghast that Kennedy had failed to win language preventing state officials from broadly redistributing federal dollars—say, to the vote-rich suburbs—now targeted specifically at poor areas. "A lot of traditional Democrats feel [Kennedy] gave away the store," says one Senate Democratic staffer. Some go so far as to speculate that pride, not principle, was behind the deal. Kennedy, they suggest, simply could not bear being out of the loop on such a signature issue and became too eager to deal. "I think under that lion skin is a very insecure and needy man," says one person who watched the process unfold. Concedes Sandy Kress, Bush's top education aide, "I'm not sure, had anyone wanted to, anyone could have kept Ted Kennedy out of the game."

Kennedy's allies—and there are still plenty of them—see a loftier motive: a desire to keep centrist Democrats from brokering a plan liberals would hate even more. According to one Senate aide, the agreement was a "policy of containment" that headed off a worse deal and gave Kennedy control over the process." Kennedy did, in fact, convince the White House to limit the scope of Straight A's. Bush had called for offering the waiver to all 50 states; under Kennedy's compromise, just seven states, and no more than 25 school districts total, can participate over the next five years. Kennedy also got the administration to declare several federal programs—including those targeted at "vulnerable" groups like homeless children, Native Americans, and immigrants—off-limits to money-shuffling.

But those guarantees didn't mollify the critics. Although the Senate never held a vote on Straight A's alone, during the floor debate, liberals like Connecticut's Chris Dodd and Rhode Island's Jack Reed made clear their unhappiness with it. Dodd, particularly upset that the after-school programs he has championed weren't protected, mused bitterly, "There was some negotiation that went on, and so some [programs] made it, some didn't. I accept that. That is politics. That is how it works. Don't try to convince me it was done on the merits. It was done on who could get in the room, who couldn't, what deal was going on."

The Senate eventually passed the bill with Kennedy's Straight A's compromise intact. But it fared worse in the House. California Representative George Miller, the ranking Democrat on the education committee, flatly refused to consider the compromise, saying it would "deprive America's neediest students of critical support." After Miller's education committee produced a bill that didn't include the measure, conservatives tried to restore Straight A's via a floor amendment, producing a peculiar dynamic. "You had conservatives in the House ... using Kennedy's name to demand what passed in the Senate," Manley chuckles. Eventually, Bush called off the floor amendments. ("He didn't

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want a bloodbath," says South Carolina Representative Jim DeMint, who led the charge.) The House approved language allowing up to 100 local school districts limited freedom to shift federal dollars from program to program—but without any new involvement by state government, and with a strict prohibition against raiding Title I spending targeted at the poorest schools.

When the House-Senate conference committee reconciles the two bills over the next several weeks, Kennedy will have one last chance to assuage his erstwhile allies—either by revealing additional concessions he has pried from the White House or by ditching Straight A's altogether. Most liberals hope it's the latter: "That's the goal of most of the Democrats there—to kill the [program]," says one Senate aide. Naturally, the White House and Senate Republicans are determined not to let that happen; they'd like a final package that looks more like Kennedy's Senate bill and less like the stripped-down House version. In other words, an empowered Ted Kennedy may not be the Republicans' worst nightmare after all; he might be their last, best hope. ■

How to try Milosevic.

We Are Not the World

By MICHAEL IGNATIEFF

NOW THAT SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC is behind bars, not everyone is celebrating the "triumph of human rights" and "universal justice." Various commentators are having second thoughts, not about Milosevic's guilt but about the legitimacy of the Hague tribunal and "universal jurisdiction" in general. For one writer in *The Washington Post*, nearly everything is wrong with the tribunal—interminable trials, few verdicts, exorbitant costs. For Russian observers, the arrest is another example of the tyranny of Western "humanitarian politics." For the influential *Die Zeit* in Germany, Milosevic's fate is a triumph not of justice but of power. For Henry Kissinger—what else would we expect him to say?—universal prosecutions turn justice into political witch-hunts.

These second thoughts illustrate the precarious legitimacy of international justice. Universal justice violates old ideas of what justice is. To do justice is to do it in the name of a particular community: a republic, a kingdom, a distinct polity. (This idea has no stronger defender than the United States, which, while supporting universal jurisdiction for Milosevic, fiercely insists that the only justice with legitimate jurisdiction over American citizens is American.) Universal justice, by contrast, acts not in the name of a community but in the name of an entity—the international community—that is almost certainly a fiction. It reflects a longing to define some evil as so unquestionable, so beyond doubt, that the entire human race can agree on its proscription. Universal justice, therefore, is supposed not merely to *enforce* moral universalism but to bring into being the sentiments on which its legitimacy depends. This is what shrouds the procedure in doubt. One person's "universal jurisdiction" is another's "victor's justice." What is infamy to one observer—certainly to this one—is to another a pardonable crime of state.

Which is why I can defend Milosevic's trial, whatever the outcome, but not on the terms offered by most of my fellow liberal internationalists. They present his trial as the inevitable linear descendant of a process of internationalization of justice that began at Nuremberg. This is a mistake. First of all, it misremembers Nuremberg, which was seen at the time (and not just by unrepentant ex-Nazis) as a national exercise in victor's justice. Secondly, history is not a tidy accomplice of liberal designs: In the week after Milosevic was flown to The Hague, the courts in Chile adjourned the Pinochet matter sine die. The International Criminal Court is reefed on American objections. History is not going anywhere, still less in a liberal direction, unless liberals argue their case with greater clarity and circumspection—and not on the grounds of an inexorably spreading morality. The best justice is national, rooted in national traditions of legitimacy, procedure, and language. And the best rationale for international justice is that it steps in when national justice faces a crime that is too political, too massive, too difficult, to try in its own courts. International justice should be a default jurisdiction whose legitimacy depends entirely on the inability or incapacity of a national court to take on its obligations.

SUCH IS THE case with Serbia. Not even those who opposed Milosevic's extradition denied that it would have been impossible to try him at home. There wasn't a single judge in the Yugoslav system who did not owe his career to the man. He had poisoned every well, including the wells of justice. In such a case, only The Hague would do. But there is also a risk in moving justice to The Hague. It is the risk of using Milosevic's trial to vindicate principles other than one man's guilt or innocence. The Milosevic trial will not vindicate the universality of conscience. Nor is it a truth and reconciliation commission on the Balkan wars. Its only purpose is to establish whether this particular human being did specific wrongs to specific people in distinct places—justice in its most prosaic, precise, and ordinary form.

Milosevic is charged, after all, neither with being an offense to right-thinking human beings nor with being a tiresome opponent of Western hegemony—as Russian and Serbian defenders keep saying—but with specific crimes against specific persons in small villages with names like Mala Krusa, places that you do not forget if you have been there, because of the smell of death in June 1999 and the children's clothing strewn about by families in flight. The victims have absolutely no need of our tears, still less of a

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show trial with a foregone outcome. They do not even need justice, since most of them are dead. But it would be good for their descendants if there were disclosure (I did not say closure). Their particular moments of horror need to be written down and demonstrated "beyond a reasonable doubt" in a system of justice that is as indubitably hard, clear-sighted, and exact as we can make it.

That will not be easy. Those who fear that Milosevic will turn the trial into a circus are almost certainly correct. His day in court will stretch into months, and he will use the disembodied limelight of The Hague to smear his victims and any American or European government officials who had the misfortune of negotiating with him. Of course this will be embarrassing. Richard Holbrooke can't be looking forward to his subpoena from the defense counsel. Nor can Wes Clark or Joschka Fischer. Everything I did, Milosevic will proclaim, was done with tacit nudges, winks, and covert approval from the hypocritical West. I am your dirty secret, he will say. There are lies in this, and a smidgen of truth as well, and the disclosure of the whole tangled tale will be embarrassing. But justice is often an embarrassment. If Milosevic wishes to prove that the West was complicit in his evils, let him try. If there is truth in this, let us hear it.

It will be particularly interesting to know what intelligence was turned over to the tribunal. This is perhaps the most underreported and interesting development of all: the most secretive agencies of national governments collaborating in limited forms of intelligence-sharing with an agency of the United Nations. The sharing of state secrets with a tribunal—and we have no idea how much has been given to them— represents a new moment in the history of the Western nation-state. But intelligence evidence will also prove embarrassing, for a conviction will require more than promissory notes from the CIA and the DIA. It will require evidence that Western intelligence overheard explicit orders from Milosevic far enough down the chain of command to disprove his obvious line of defense: that he had never heard of places like Mala Krusa and could not have cared less if he had.

FOR ALL THE criticism of The Hague, some of it justified, it is certain that Milosevic will get a fairer trial there than he would have at the hands of his own citizens. There are more justifiable concerns about whether Serbs themselves will have access to the rituals of justice they need. Of course, it would have been better to have him tried by his own people in his own land: Legal legitimacy proceeds from the idea that you can judge only what you truly understand, and only Serbs can truly understand this man. And it would have better served the pedagogical functions of justice as well. The message of his trial is really wasted on those who watch from The Hague. The people who need to learn from it are in Belgrade, Nis, and Novi Sad. But once justice is done in The Hague, it won't be seen to be done in these places.

Such justice, done abroad, will not be cathartic. Yet catharsis through trial is mostly a fantasy anyway. As with O.J. Simpson, so with Milosevic: The trial will not unify. It will divide. Half of Serbs will get on with their lives, while the other half will half-listen, if only to confirm what they already believe. A trial does not change minds so much as reinforce what people always thought they knew. Its business is not catharsis, comfort, or storytelling. Its business is truth. What justice can do is establish—if only in the drone of evidence, testimony, affidavits, court exhibits, photographs, grimaces of witnesses—that certain things really did happen. One does not have to make a fetish of forensic truth to believe that, when it is all over, some facts will be established "beyond a reasonable doubt." That is enough.

Yugoslavians—that vanished race—did not know what crimes the Ustashe, Partisans, Nazis, and Italians committed in World War II. Because the Titoist regime denied the very possibility of a multifaceted search for truth, the people of the Balkans lived in a half-life of fantasy, propaganda, and lurid semi-sexual ethnic innuendo. Out of this mass of relativist lying came the return of the repressed, fantasies of revenge for imagined wrongs. What The Hague might do is simply establish—in sober, boring detail—who did what to whom and when and how. Call this hope our last residual fantasy of justice. But it is the most basic. The truth of the Balkans is not in the eye of the beholder. It is there to be established by justice. We *will* know what we must know. And when we know, justice will be done. ■

London Dispatch

Under Fire

By TIM LUCKHURST

GEORGE W. BUSH has probably never heard of Tam Dalyell. Only the most dedicated students of British politics are familiar with the 69-year-old member of Parliament for the Scottish constituency of Linlithgow who, on June 7, became the most senior member of the House of Commons, a status that carries the title "Father of the House." But, in the coming months, Dalyell is likely to become a major thorn in Prime Minister Tony Blair's side. Which means he could become a thorn in President Bush's side as well.

The Father of the House begins his incumbency with a respect verging on reverence in the Commons. Unlike his predecessor in the position, the former conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath, Dalyell accumulates and spends his political capital shrewdly—picking fights that don't seem self-interested and where he has a real chance to win. And it just happens that the fight he's about to pick is with George W. Bush's primary national security initiative.

In his election address (the printed campaign message every parliamentary candidate can mail, at public expense, to every voter in his constituency) before Britain's June 7

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general election, Dalyell declared, "In this election, one issue dwarfs, or ought to dwarf, all others." That issue was missile defense and, specifically, whether Blair should endorse Bush's plan to deploy it. The veteran socialist who crusaded against the Gulf war and the bombing of Serbia is resolute. "If Mr. Blair insists on going ahead with this," he says, "his prime ministership will be under threat." He continues, "I will lead the opposition. I want nothing the government can give me. I have been on the phone constantly. The Father of the House does carry a certain authority."

At first glance, the idea that Dalyell's campaign could really harm Blair seems preposterous. Labour, after all, has a massive 167-vote majority over all other parties in the House of Commons. But mere arithmetic ignores the nature of the parliamentary Labour Party, a force Dalyell—a former member of Labour's most powerful body, the National Executive Committee—understands intimately.

Many older Labour MPs remain firmly wedded to the party's once avowed support for nuclear disarmament. They have fond memories of the peace protests that in the 1980s greeted the deployment of nuclear-armed cruise missiles on Greenham Common in Berkshire.

On their own, these old bulls could probably be silenced; they represent less than 15 percent of Labour's parliamentary strength. But they are joined by a newer constituency: young pro-European Labourites. Unlike the old lefties, the New Labour MPs wear Armani suits and Jaeger dresses. And they are usually loyal to the prime minister. But the new Labourites consider British support for missile defense a potential death knell for the United Kingdom's influence in the European Union. In particular, they fear it could radically undermine Britain's voice in the debate over the EU's enlargement east. Their faction already contains at least 150 backbench MPs. And, in conjunction with the old lefties, they can wreak real damage. In late 1997 and early 1998, a new-old coalition of Labour MPs coalesced to oppose Blair's cuts in welfare benefits to single parents. Blair won, but only barely and after significant public embarrassment, including the resignation of his minister for local government, housing, and transport at the Scottish office.

ALL THINGS BEING equal, Blair's inclination is always to support the U.S. president and thus to confirm the "special relationship" that means so much to the British and so little to Americans. But, like the younger MPs, Blair also worries about Europe. He has already offended the EU by refusing early British entry into its single-currency zone. That alone has undermined his much-publicized desire to head the European Commission after he steps down as prime minister, probably after he finishes his current term. British support for missile defense would further weaken Blair's European credentials and confirm the French jibe that "Britain always marches to Washington's tune."

Already, fear of European retaliation has forced Blair to temper his support for W.'s pet project. When Bush first mooted missile defense after he took office, the prime minister's official spokesman was quick to indicate support "in principle" for the project. But during this spring's election campaign, the prime minister tried to avoid the subject. And then, between last November and this June, his foreign secretary, Robin Cook, suggested that it might be preferable to engage rogue states diplomatically instead.

But even more dangerous than the Continental politics of missile defense are the parliamentary politics. According to Dalyell, "Opposition on the Labour benches is huge. Any MP who supports [national missile defense] knows he will face real problems with reselection"—the process whereby local party activists choose candidates for election to Westminster. Other Labour politicians agree. They note that Blair has offended colleagues since the election by appointing Sally Morgan, once his own political secretary, as minister for women and by promoting Douglas Alexander, a young Blairite ultra-loyalist with extremely limited experience, to a senior ministerial post. Last week, the former defense minister, Peter Kilfoyle, a constructive and mainstream Labour politician, condemned missile defense in vitriolic terms. When the new foreign secretary, Jack Straw, cautiously endorsed the plan in his column in the left-wing magazine *Tribune*, Kilfoyle declared: "I find it curious that a senior figure in the government could so publicly embrace Bush's madcap venture. The slavish adherence to all things American flies in the face of national interest."

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More than 200 Labour MPs have already signed a Commons motion expressing reservations about missile defense. The powerful all-party Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee has called on ministers to voice widespread public concern that missile defense will fuel a new arms race. And last week Labour backbenchers showed their rebellious mood by ignoring Blair's wishes and reappointing two old Labour traditionalists, Gwyneth Dunwoody and Donald Anderson, to important committee chairmanships. What's more, Blair probably can't expect much help across the aisles. The Liberal Democrat Party, which boasts 52 MPs, is on record against missile defense. And a number of Tory MPs will likely oppose it as well, if only to give Blair a bloody nose.

Missile defense will be thrust into the headlines this October at Labour's annual conference in the seaside town of Brighton, where Dalyell and his supporters hope to put the issue to a vote by party members. Such a vote would pave the way for a fight in Parliament. The U.S. radar bases at Fylingdales and Menwith Hill in North Yorkshire must be upgraded if missile defense is to provide the early interception the president craves. A vote in the Commons could stop that modernization and deny British consent for the targeting and launch of U.S.-controlled missiles from British territory. Which would force George W. Bush to learn Tam Dalyell's name in a hurry. ■

The Times tries to rewrite history.

Times Bomb

By ROBERT SATLOFF

IMAGINE *THE NEW YORK TIMES* covering the sinking of the *Titanic* with only a passing reference to the iceberg. Absurd? Not really. On July 26 the nation's newspaper of record devoted 5,681 words to a retrospective by Jerusalem bureau chief Deborah Sontag titled "Quest for Mideast Peace: How and Why It Failed" and mentioned the word "intifada" just once. While virtually ignoring the Palestinian uprising that has brought the Middle East to the brink of war, the story pushes two arguments. First, that the peace process included "missteps and successes by Israelis, Palestinians and Americans alike." Second, that, in the months following Camp David, the parties were much closer to a final deal than was previously thought. But a close look at Sontag's story reveals lazy reporting, errors of omission, questionable shading, and an indifference to the basic fact that the Palestinian decision to wed diplomacy with violence, not American and Israeli miscues, damned the search for peace.

Sontag's is not the only revisionist look at Mideast diplomacy to hit the newsstands in recent weeks. Writing in the current issue of *The New York Review of Books*, former National Security Council staffer Rob Malley also ascribes much of the blame for Oslo's failure to Bill Clinton and Ehud Barak rather than to Yasir Arafat. But Malley's article is coauthored with a consultant to Palestinian negotiators, which makes its credibility inherently suspect. And it doesn't carry the imprimatur of the *Times*.

Unfortunately, Sontag's story doesn't deserve to either. At the article's outset, she explains that her investigation is based on interviews with "key" negotiators and diplomats. But only eight of the three dozen Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans who participated at Camp David are quoted from her own interviews. She cites her own conversation with just one American, then-Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk, while relying on recycled comments from others. Absent from her tale are interviews she herself conducted with such central Clinton administration players as the president, the secretary of state, the national security adviser, and the special Middle East coordinator, to name just four.

BUT IF SONTAG is lazy with her American sources, she's downright ideological with the Israelis. Two of the three Israelis Sontag quotes are former Labor Ministers Shlomo Ben Ami and Yossi Beilin, men so disgruntled that they have criticized their party's participation in the current national unity government. Even so, Ben Ami has said he considers Arafat to blame for the collapse of the talks. In fact, Ben Ami is now on a media crusade to get the international community to impose a final peace agreement on Israel and the Palestinians because making peace directly with Arafat, he contends, is impossible. Sontag neglects to mention any of that. She approvingly quotes her third Israeli source—Barak's chief of staff, Gilead Sher—as saying that peace is "doable, feasible and reasonable." But she doesn't say that Sher gave a public speech in Washington, D.C., on April 16, 2001, stating that by the end of September 2000 it had become clear that Arafat would only accept an agreement "in which all his demands were met." And Sontag doesn't cite any of Israel's Camp David veterans who are scathingly critical of Arafat—for instance, the widely respected centrist Dan Meridor, Barak's Security Adviser Danny Yatom, and Attorney General Elyakim Rubinstein.

Perhaps most remarkable is Sontag's assertion that Barak was "unwilling to talk." To her, perhaps; to the world, he has spoken at length. In fact, a full week before the publication of Sontag's article, Barak delivered a 45-minute speech in Washington that was repeatedly broadcast on C-SPAN, offering his detailed views on the events of the past year. The full text of that speech was posted on the Internet on July 23, two days before Sontag's article went to press. In Barak's version, Arafat is the culprit par excellence. But Sontag doesn't grapple with the former prime minister's comments at all.

With the Palestinians, Sontag's reporting follows a similar pattern. Aside from Arafat, whose sole quote is a diatribe against Israel's intransigence, she cites three negotiators—Abu Ala, Saeb Erekat, and Nabil Shaath—who (along with Hanan Ashrawi) are the most widely quoted Palestinians in the English-speaking world. Sontag transmits these men's

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soothing, how-close-we-came assertions while ignoring their less conciliatory statements. She fails to note, for instance, that Shaath appeared on Arab satellite television in the early days of the intifada to endorse the Algeria/Vietnam models of talking and shooting at the same time; that Abu Ala admitted to American journalist David Brooks in his July 2–July 9, 2001, *Weekly Standard* article, "The Death of Compromise," that "[i]t is impossible from now to 1,000 years that the Palestinians will decrease their size from the 1967 borders"; and that he and Erekat are both on record saying that the parties were far apart on the issues of Jerusalem and refugees, even by the end of the last-ditch Taba negotiations in January 2001, six months after Camp David. And Sontag completely ignores other Arafat intimates, like Cabinet ministers Imad Faluji and Ziad Abu Zayyad, who have both reportedly said that the intifada was part of the Palestinians' strategic plan, as well as the late Faisal Husseini, the PLO's "minister" for Jerusalem, who this year publicly praised the historic objective of building Palestine "from the river to the sea" (i.e., eradicating Israel).

FOR A JOURNALIST who takes aim at what she calls the "potent, simplistic narrative" of Barak's generosity and Arafat's culpability, Sontag's own story is remarkably free of complexity. This refusal to grapple with uncomfortable issues is most pronounced in Sontag's avoidance of the intifada. To her, the failure of the peace process was due to bad chemistry (Barak chatting up Chelsea Clinton instead of Arafat at Camp David) and bad timing (Bill Clinton waiting too long to offer his own peace plan). In her telling, the Palestinian uprising is just part of the background landscape.

But it is not just part of the background landscape. The uprising so transformed the Israeli-Palestinian political context that by the time the two sides were, in Sontag's telling, agonizingly close, it no longer mattered. By January's Taba talks, Barak had the support of just one-third of his people and an even smaller fraction of his parliament. Arafat, for his part, had forged an alliance between his Fatah movement and the radical Hamas opposition. But to discuss the intifada, its roots, and its impact would complicate Sontag's tale of imminent peace gone awry, so she sets it aside. The result is that lynchings, stonings, mortar shelling, and drive-by shootings are acts of violence that, like traffic accidents, just happen. The "cycle of violence started," "an intense spasm of violence erupted," "two Israelis were killed," she writes. By repeatedly employing the passive voice, she avoids assigning responsibility. And if no one is to blame, then focusing on the violence and its causes can only divert attention from the real issue: what happened in the smoke-filled negotiating rooms.

Hence, Sontag makes not a single reference to how violence—any violence—on the part of the Palestinians violated the founding accord of the Israel-PLO relationship, an exchange of letters between Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin four days before the signing of the Oslo understandings in September 1993. (Israel's recognition of the PLO was premised on the organization's written commitment to forswear terrorism and violence and to pursue diplomacy as the only means to achieve its objectives.) Sontag makes no reference to Arafat's nine-month-long rejection of American pleas for a cease-fire or his flouting of understandings reached with Clinton at Sharm al-Sheikh on October 16 and 17, 2000, and with Shimon Peres in Gaza on November 1. She ignores Arafat's speech in Davos on January 28, 2001, when, the day after the Taba talks had ended and with Peres at his side, he lambasted Israel for using "fascist military aggression." Nor does Sontag mention the sacking of Joseph's Tomb, the terrorist exploits of Tanzim leader Marwan Bargouti, or the repeated denials by Palestinian officials, from Arafat on down, of any Jewish connection to the Temple Mount. Any of that would have marred her portrayal of Arafat as a cooperative partner in peace.

Sontag's discussion of Israeli and Palestinian popular opinion, which radically constricted what negotiators could offer, is also thin and misleading. Time and again, Sontag uses terms like "many," "most," "some," and "few" to marginalize Oslo's critics and enhance the credibility of the doves. (There is, of course, no "left wing" in her story—only "peace advocates" on one side and "right-wing" politicians on the other.) She includes no statistics from the dozens of opinion polls of Israelis and Palestinians during the six months from Camp David to Taba, polls that revealed the deepening chasm between the two sides. Had she done so, she would have had to acknowledge that by Taba, which to her represents the brink of peace, 73 percent of Palestinians supported "military resistance" against Israel, and 62 percent of Israelis rejected Clinton's outline for a peace proposal. By that point, public attitudes had hardened so much that the last-ditch negotiations were, in fact, a surreal exercise disconnected from political reality.

AS WITH ALL revisionism, there is a kernel of truth in Sontag's account: Diplomacy did not end with Camp David, and Israel did make ever-more-generous offers. Israelis and Americans did make mistakes, from which there is much to learn. But to lump together U.S. and Israeli diplomatic errors with Arafat's refusal to negotiate fully and peacefully with an Israeli government keen to end the conflict is to turn the peaks and valleys of history into a monotonous prairie of moral equivalence. Sontag not only misses the big story—the intifada—but she gets wrong even the peripheral story she focuses on: that the parties were close to the brass ring at Taba. They weren't, and supporters of a lasting peace should be thankful that the parties were still far apart and that no deal emerged. At that hyper-polarized moment, Israeli voters almost certainly would have rejected such a deal, setting back peacemaking even further.

Eventually, once the current horror subsides, Palestinians and Israelis—with America's help—will probably resume discussing the basic issues that divide them. In the meantime, the final weeks of diplomacy prior to Ariel Sharon's victory over Barak, in which Sontag sees such hope, deserve examination only as a case study in diplomatic irrelevance—the kind of exercise we can only hope future Israeli, American, and Palestinian negotiators learn to avoid. ■

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Robert Blake, Bonny Lee Bakley, and the misery of celebrity.

To Die For

By David Grann

"Everybody is kind of sitting around waiting for a slow speed chase and waiting to write, you know, this into a movie."
—A guest on "The Edge With Paula Zahn," Fox News, May 15

This is a true story about how the quest for fame can lead to death, and how death in turn can lead to fame—about two people on opposite sides of the velvet rope who came together in their own bloody and inevitable climax to our century-long obsession with celebrity. And it begins not in the present, where it ultimately ends in murder, but earlier in the twentieth century when our national culture of celebrity was being born.

It was around 1935, when the country was still in the grip of the Great Depression, and a family of five—a father, a mother, and three kids dressed in straw hats and overalls—left their run-down tenement in a small New Jersey town for a local park. There, an alderman was holding a rally, handing out hot dogs and beer while jugglers and clowns wandered through the crowd, trying to make a buck. The father took out his guitar and introduced "The Three Little Hillbillies"; the children began to sing and dance. One of them was not even three. His name was Michael Gubitosi. He had black hair, brown eyes, and an adorable expression that drew the crowd.

According to the boy's later accounts, this was how the family survived, going from place to place, seeking donations. It brought in barely enough food, and, at night, when they returned home, the father would drink himself into a rage. Around 1936 the family drove to Los Angeles, where the father planned to trade in their novelty act for the big screen. It was the golden age of Hollywood, or HOLLYWOODLAND, as the sign overlooking the valley still said—the infancy of the celebrity culture of the movies. Fan magazines like *Photoplay* and *Silver Screen*, and the growing number of celebrity-gossip columnists like Walter Winchell, were creating a new class of American icons to compete with the presidents and steel barons and war heroes who'd previously dominated the national consciousness. Whereas the old cosmology was rooted in character, virtue, and accomplishment, the new one celebrated personality, glamour, and scandal. It implied that anyone could make it if they had what the how-to-be-a-star handbooks of the time called a "gift." "Nobody knows," wrote *American Magazine* in 1940, "when or where one of these [stars] will bop up." Hollywood had attracted so many people seeking fame and fortune that, at one point, the Chamber of Commerce ran an ad in the papers trying to dissuade them: "Out of 100,000 Persons Who Started at the Bottom of the Screen's Ladder of Fame, only FIVE Reached the Top."

Michael and his family first auditioned in casting offices; when that failed, they stood outside studios, along with hundreds of others, hoping to become extras. Sometimes a man would appear and yell, *We need twenty guys to swing from trees in Tarzan*. The father, who had hoped to become the next great movie tough guy like Edward G. Robinson or James Cagney, never found work; neither did the older brother or sister. But one morning, the call went out for a group of kids for *Our Gang*—the original short films with Alfalfa and Spanky and Buckwheat, who later became known as the Little Rascals—and Michael was brought in as an extra. The young boy appeared on the show several times, not saying a word. Then, one day, as he later liked to boast, he

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was standing on the set when one of the other kids was struggling to get out his line. After watching for a while, Michael, who was only five at the time, says he walked up to the exasperated director and said, "*I* can do that." Soon, he landed the role of Little Mickey.

For the next ten years he worked as a child actor, supporting his entire family. His father, he said, despised him for it and turned increasingly violent. And so Michael spent almost all his time on the set, appearing in at least 80 films during the 1940s, including *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* with Humphrey Bogart. "He was one of the most devoted juvenile actors I ever worked with, including Judy Garland," one of his directors, George Sidney, told me.

As with most actors at the time, the studios controlled nearly every aspect of his career, including his image. Relying on the burgeoning publicity industry—which, as Walter Lippman noted in 1927, will "illuminate whatever we point it at"—they not only decided how an actor dressed and spoke in public (Buster Keaton, for example, was prohibited from laughing) but unleashed biographies filled with tidbits about a star's private life for the tabloids. In the boy's case, the studio decided to change his name; it was apparently too ethnic. And so Michael Gubitosi became Robert Blake.

But, like all child actors, Blake ran into the one obstacle neither his talent nor the studio system could overcome: He grew. By his late teens, he no longer fit the persona the studio had constructed for him; rather than the adorable child who could sing and dance, he looked like a hood—his legs too skinny, his chest too broad, his eyes too dark and menacing. Marginalized from the makeshift family he had found at MGM, he ran away from his real one as well. By his early twenties, he says, he was shooting up heroin. "I couldn't hide behind the things that had helped me get through when I was a kid—the sets and the studios and the Saturday matinees...," he told *Playboy* in 1977. "I was as close to being in a living hell as I ever want to get."

His father, Blake says, killed himself around 1955. All the old Little Rascals seemed to be dying, too. Alfalfa, it was reported, was shot to death in a barroom brawl; Scotty Beckett, known as Scotty on the show, overdosed on drugs years later. Billy Laughlin, who played Froggy, cracked up his motor scooter and died before he was 17. "Most of the kid actors I knew are dead now, from dope, or shot in half with shotguns...," Blake once said. "The fear that I could end up that way haunted me for years."

IT WAS AROUND this time, in 1956, that a little girl named Bonny Lee Bakley was born not far from where Blake grew up in New Jersey. According to her family, she was so shy she seemed to dissolve in the presence of others; whenever she was around her father—like Blake's, an abusive drunk—she would hyperventilate and pass out. One night, while her mother was in the hospital in labor, those close to her allege, he tried to molest her. She was seven.

She was sent to live with her grandmother, a paranoid woman who lived in the country in a trailer. "She had it really tough in the woods with Granny," her sister, Margerry, told me. "Granny had this fear of running out of water. Bonny wasn't allowed to use any.... She'd go to school, and her hair would be greasy. You're a girl and want to be pretty, and Granny wouldn't let her." Once Bakley tried to slip into a department store to wash her hair like the starlets she saw at the movie house each Sunday with her grandmother, but she was caught in the bathroom and thrown out by the police.

"I grew up, like, I was the kid that everybody hated in school," Bakley told a friend years later in a conversation she tape-recorded, "'cause I was, like, poor and couldn't dress good and you know, and everybody always made fun of me because I was, like, a real loner type. So then you grow up saying, *Oh, I'll fix them. I'll show them I'll be a movie star.*"

She tried everything to make it. She dropped out of high school at 16 and reportedly enrolled at the Barbizon School of Modeling, which was advertised in the back of teen magazines. She read advice books about how to present herself in public and overcome her shyness. *Say everything not once, but twice*, she'd say, as if trying to build her confidence. But apparently it wasn't until 1985, after more than ten years of auditions and modeling nude to survive, that she appeared in a real film, as an extra in *Turk 182!*, a movie by the director of *Porky's*. "She knew she couldn't do it," says her sister—that, as another friend put it, "she didn't have it." As her acting career disintegrated, she tried singing and recorded a single, "Rock-a-Billy Love," that paid tribute to Elvis Presley ("Rock-and-roll Leebonny is my name"). But, as a friend told me, "She couldn't sing, so she'd ... just talk like a rap artist."

BUT BAKLEY DIDN'T give up trying to become famous; she realized that there were other ways to make it. In *Turk 182!*, the protagonist, played by Timothy Hutton, transformed himself from a greasy loner like Bakley into a star—not by any great deed or special talent but by merely painting graffiti around the city and other carefully publicized stunts, winding up celebrated on magazine and tabloid covers, T-shirts, and billboards. Indeed, at one point, Bakley herself, according to her sister and others, put up her own billboard on Sunset Boulevard in which she apparently lay on her side in a black evening gown, promoting herself as someone who should be well-known simply for being well-known. (Although the plan didn't work out, it anticipated the later success of pseudo-celeb Angelyne, who placed billboards around Los Angeles featuring herself looking out from behind sunglasses, her hair bleached blond, her breasts bursting out of her spandex. She was profiled by *People*—the demarcation of the new celebrity—and scores of other magazines and TV shows, even though, as even *People* noted, she is "untalented by her own admission" and "has nothing to offer but her inflated, billboard-size image." Her assistant said of her success: "A celebrity is famous for *being* a celebrity.")

After acting and singing and other assorted stunts failed to bring Bakley the fame she craved, she came up with a new approach. According to her taped conversations, she confessed to a friend: "[Acting] was too hard ... so I figured, well, why not *fall* for movie stars ... instead of becoming one."

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Blake, meanwhile, who had been a movie star as a child, had become something else altogether by adulthood. For several years in his twenties, he has said he sold drugs to support his habit and contemplated following his father's suicide with his own. But in his early thirties, Blake came back from the brink, drying out and starting to act more seriously again. In 1967, director Richard Brooks chose him—in part because he *wasn't* famous—for the role of Perry Smith in the film adaptation of Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, the true story of Smith and another petty thief who, in the course of a rural robbery, murdered an entire family. (According to *Life* magazine, the real Smith was transfixed by his own newfound celebrity. When Capote visited him shortly before his execution and told him about the crowds that were at his trial, he asked excitedly, "Were any representatives of the cinema there?' ")

Blake plunged into the role, digging into his own demons. He and Smith were both children of alcoholic, abusive parents; both were insecure and highly volatile. (Blake called himself a walking "time bomb"; in the movie Smith says, "I had a bomb ticking inside me.") They even looked alike. Blake told a reporter, "What I felt Truman was really writing about ... was this: Everybody knows what a murderer is a millionth of a second after he pulls the trigger. But what is he a millionth of a second before he pulls the trigger?" Then he added, "I can conceive of *me* killing somebody, but that's because I'm a human being, not God, and I'd hope that somebody would stop me from doing it."

When the movie came out, Blake's intense and oddly sympathetic portrayal won him instant acclaim. But, despite the success, he seemed more plagued than ever by mood swings and self-doubt. He punched a director and soon had trouble finding good roles. Finally, he had a nervous breakdown. "[N]othing *had* been turnin' out right," he told *Playboy*, "and when you go for month after month like that, you get like a dog that's locked in a room; it can't go out and fight with other dogs or get laid or anything, so it starts chewin' on its own paws and crackin' up." Around 1974 he spent two weeks in a hospital, he said, staring at the walls and popping tranquilizers—caught, as he put it, "in the madness of Hollywood."

When he got out, he went to an old manager to see if he could find work, even if it meant abandoning his movie career for television. Three months later, he was cast as the lead in the ABC police drama "Baretta," a series about an undercover cop who said things like *Dead's dead and it don't come back again*, carried a cockatoo on his shoulder, and—like Blake's childhood hero Bogart, whom he fashioned the part after—seemed to walk the fine line between goodness and crookedness. In 1975 the role won Blake an Emmy. "Baretta" once again made Blake a star. "I feel a hundred feet taller than I ever felt before," he said at the time. "There's some motherfuckers out there I told twenty years ago, *I'll show you, you cocksuckers*, and now, someplace, they're alive and know that I showed 'em."

By the 1980s Bonny Lee Bakley, now in her late twenties and already divorced with children, had decided to marry a star. She developed an elaborate system to pursue prospective targets. At first, Bakley's friends and family say, she would cut out pictures of celebrities and read everything about them. Then she went to local bars and theaters where, she heard, they hung out. She even did background searches, as if she were a private eye. "She set down with pen and paper and she kept a listing on everyone ...," one of her friends told me. "She'd write down their favorite colors, their clothing, their special food, where they ate, what they ordered."

Her first obsession was Frankie Valli, of whom she'd collected boxes of memorabilia, posters, records, and files, and whose songs she could recite by heart, including, according to her sister, her favorite, "Rag Doll" ("When she was just a kid her clothes were hand-me-down.... / They always laughed at her when she came into town.... / Called her rag doll, little rag doll.... / Such a pretty face should be dressed in lace"). But then one day she read a celebrity biography of Jerry Lee Lewis, the legendary rock-and-roller who sang "Great Balls of Fire." Bakley was fascinated by the way Lewis had overcome poverty and humiliation to become one of the best-known music stars of the '60s. And so, even though the peak of his career had long since passed, she started showing up at his concerts in New Jersey and, after a while, began following him around the country. "We'd be in someplace up in Canada, and she'd show up, or Los Angeles or Portland or Boston, and she'd bribe her way backstage," Ray Hale, Lewis's former tour manager, told me. "She never gave up," added Lewis's sister, Linda Gail. "She had some guy ... who worked for one of the airlines, and he could find when my brother was flying, and she'd buy a first-class ticket and sit beside him. I thought that was pretty crazy."

Despite this strange behavior, many who met Bakley say she came across as more captivating than most groupies. Drawing on her acting skills and her imagination, she seemed to re-create herself to reflect the people she was pursuing. "She always knew what a star wanted," her sister says.

Several people close to Bakley told me that Lewis slowly began to succumb to her adulation. "It was my job to keep Bonny from Jerry," Hale, Lewis's former tour manager, told me, "because Jerry Lee's wife was jealous of her, and Jerry Lee liked her."

In a statement Lewis and his family recently released, he told his own version: "[Bakley] was an avid fan, but after some time she began harassing my family ... she moved to Memphis in the hope that I would leave my devoted wife ... and marry her: merely a figment of her own imagination."

At one point, perhaps out of desperation or perhaps because she really believed it, she announced that she was pregnant with Lewis's baby. Lewis denied that he was the father, and today says her claim was thrown out of court when he proved he was out of the country when the baby was conceived. Still, when Bakley gave birth to a little girl in the summer of 1993, she named her Jeri Lee Lewis.

But in the end the baby only turned Lewis's inner circle further against her. And, as even she realized that her chances of marrying Lewis were all but over, she set out for the place that had always fueled her imagination: Hollywood.

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BLAKE, WHO HAD achieved fame in Hollywood two, perhaps three times, was still not happy. When he walked down Rodeo Drive, even as the star of "Baretta," everything felt fake. *The fame. The studios. The stars. Even the craft.* "It's almost like you pay $3.50 to see a movie and while you're watching it, the film self-destructs...," he told *Playboy*. "And by the time you walk out of the theater, you can't even remember what the film was about. Movies have become *that* temporary."

What was remarkable was not that he had such thoughts but that he shared them. He'd go on the talk shows and rail against the hollowness of the industry, the big suits who were more concerned about money than art, the creative people who weren't creative, the actors who couldn't act. "Listen," he'd say, "Universal does hundreds of shows a year, and it's all just so much sausage to them."

Although he alienated more and more people in the industry, including his bosses at Universal, he became the hottest interview in town. He seemed finally to have found the role he had long sought: the heroic outsider, a real life Bogart. It was hard to know if he was being himself or merely acting—Robert Blake playing Robert Blake. "[T]hough I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," he once boasted, "I will fear no evil, 'cause I'm the meanest motherfucker in the valley."

On the set, a cigarette dangling from his mouth, he fought with directors and writers and producers. "He is," one former producer complained at the time to *TV Guide*, "absolutely impossible to work for. He runs roughshod over his writers, ignores his directors, and turns everything into a war.... The word was out. He's *poison*."

In 1978 "Baretta" was cancelled. Blake tried to get back into movies, but he had offended too many people and self-destructed too many times. By 1986, after a failed TV show, he was no longer railing against Hollywood but begging to be part of it once again. Unable to retain the spotlight with his public accomplishments, he took to airing his private failures in exchange for a few more moments of attention. He even held a press conference to release a rambling, 26-page account of his childhood—an aborted draft of a Hollywood tell-all. He claimed he had recovered, through therapy, memories of being molested by his father. "My father was a sadistic madman alcoholic," he said, who would "lock me in closets for days ... tie me up like a dog ... make me eat on the floor ... [and] sexually abuse me."

By 1997 Blake was no longer well-known even for being well-known. He would show up at the Playboy Mansion with people like Fabio and Kato Kaelin and Scott Baio. He tried to collect mementos from his early movie years to hang in his home. "When somebody sends me a picture for an autograph," he told the *Los Angeles Times*, "I ask permission to make a copy before I send it back."

By this time, according to most accounts, Bakley was living a double life in Hollywood. There was Bonny Lee, the pretty celebrity hanger-on who, according to her address book, was trying to get close to Robert De Niro, Robert Redford, and Sylvester Stallone. And there was "Miss Leebonny," the alias under which she allegedly peddled pornography and performed petty scams to pay for Bonny Lee's lavish outfits, makeup, and travel. "I'm into sex with the right man who I want to have a relationship with," Leebonny wrote to one target, according to a copy of the letter obtained by the New York *Daily News*. "I do hope it's going to be you."

But Bakley's ultimate goal remained landing a celebrity mate. In another taped conversation, a friend listed top-flight stars for her: "Marlon Brando, he's at the top of the list. He's up there with Clark Gable and Errol Flynn...."

"Don't remind me," Bakley interrupted. "I'll be after him."

But, perhaps realizing she was never going to marry a star, she settled for the people around one. According to friends and family and her own taped conversations, she eventually tracked down Brando's son, Christian, whom she claimed she had started dating, even though his notoriety came largely from the fact that he had pled guilty to voluntary manslaughter in 1990. (Christian Brando couldn't be reached for comment; he has not publicly confirmed or denied a relationship.)

THEN ONE NIGHT a couple of years ago, Bakley spotted someone else at a Hollywood function. "They were at a jazz club...," her sister says, recalling what Bakley told her. "And they saw each other from across the room." Though she wasn't sure who it was, according to her sister, she knew he was *someone* famous, and when he was walking through the room she kept thinking, *Don't let this one get away, because this is the one you're going to marry*. Then he stopped at the table and introduced himself as Robert Blake, and she realized she had once seen him on the Johnny Carson show. According to Bakley's sister, a courtship ensued.

Blake's current attorney, Harland Braun, tells a different version: "He didn't know her fucking *name*. He didn't even have sex with her in the home. He had sex with her in the back of a truck. They were only together six or seven times."

Either way, Bakley was delirious, talking nonstop about the two celebrities—Brando and Blake—whom she believed were finally within reach. According to her taped conversations, which were later released by Blake's attorney, she asked one friend, "Who would you go for more if you were me—Blake or Christian?" She went back and forth. "I don't know if I really would want [Blake] the rest of my life ... because he's going to get even older and worse looking, and I'm already in love with Christian. So I should just leave it like that.... And then I said [to myself], 'Yeah, but it's kind of neat to have a movie star stuck on me, so maybe I should go for him.'"

At one point, a friend asked her, "Bonny, did you ever stop and try to figure out why you're only attracted to famous people?"

"Being around celebrities," she replied, "makes you feel better than other people."

It was sometime around then that Bakley told her friends and family she had another announcement: She was pregnant with Brando's baby ... or Blake's.

It seemed like another ploy to snag at least one of her favored celebrities. But she told a friend she didn't know if "the baby's going to work for me or against me." When the

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baby was born on June 2, 2000, she initially named her Christian Shannon Brando after the man she believed to be the father. But, after a paternity test showed Blake was the father, the baby was renamed Rose Lenore Sophia Blake.

When Blake found out, he exploded. "You lied to me, you double-crossed me, you double-dealt me, and that's who you are...," Blake screamed, according to a recording of their conversation. "You said, 'Don't worry, Robert. No matter what, I will have an abortion. You never have to worry about me getting pregnant. I'll take the pills, I'll have an abortion. It's OK. Relax, enjoy yourself, I care about you.'"

But, despite his anger, four months later he announced he would marry her. While his lawyer says he did it for the sake of the child—"He's very old-fashioned, and ... his obligation is to sacrifice his happiness and his life for his blood"—others speculate that she provided him with what he craved more and more: the adoration of the perfect fan. "He was all washed-up, and along came this person who treated him like a god again," said Hale, who was familiar with the relationship.

In November 2000, they were married in a small ceremony in Studio City. The marriage received little of the usual celebrity coverage, though *The Times* of India ran an item under the headline "WEDDING BELLS RING FOR ROBERT BLAKE AND BAKLEY."

It was not, by any standard, a typical marriage. While the couple tried to get to know each other, Bakley stayed in a bungalow out back; over time, friends say, they grew more and more miserable. Blake's lawyer says she continued to run petty schemes, including a plot to nab the actor Gary Busey. When Blake discovered some of her activities, his assistant has said, he broke down in tears, saying, "Sixty-five years I'm in this business. And she did this to me."

Then, on May 4, 2001, less than six months after their wedding, Blake took his wife to his favorite restaurant, Vitello's, an Italian joint a few blocks from his house where his favorite dish—corkscrew pasta with spinach and fresh tomatoes—was listed on the menu as "Fusilli a la Robert Blake."

After they finished dinner, the two walked back to their car, which was parked down the road behind a dumpster. According to Blake's lawyer, Blake suddenly realized he'd forgotten his gun inside the restaurant—a gun he says he had begun to carry everywhere after Bakley had expressed fear for her life, perhaps from one of her former scam victims. When he returned, his lawyer says, he saw her slumped over the seat, bleeding to death, a bullet in her head. He knocked on a nearby door, screaming, *My wife is hurt, my wife is hurt, please help*, then rushed back to the car. Someone brought a towel to try to stop the bleeding.

Shortly after, Bakley was declared dead.

IT BEGAN WITHIN HOURS. Helicopters shooting live video swarmed over the house. Men and women, carrying boom mikes and tripods and cameras, camped outside the hospital where Blake had checked himself in with high blood pressure. As the story unfolded 24 hours a day on cable and in the tabloids, the scene of the real murder blended into scenes from Blake's movies, a single narrative in which he played the roles he had always coveted: Perry Smith and John List (another real-life murderer played by Blake) and the character he seemed to play in his own life—the tempestuous outsider, on the verge of violence, who'd said publicly, "There's no difference between me and a lot of people on Death Row." "Dateline NBC" titled its segment on the murder "In Cold Blood"; Diane Sawyer announced it "a real Hollywood whodunit." One newscast unearthed an old scene from "Baretta":

> "I want to get married," Baretta says to his girlfriend.
>
> "Why don't we just live together," she replies, "and if we like it, we'll stay? And if we don't...."
>
> "And if we don't," he interrupts, "I'm going to *kill* you."

Though the police have made no arrests and so far remain tight-lipped about their investigations, the tabloids and the talk shows have constructed two theories of the murder. In one, the murderer was Blake, or a contract killer he hired, either because Bakley was trying to con him somehow or because, as her sister told me, he "hated her and wanted to kill her for months." In the other, the murderer was one of the hundreds whom Bakley had allegedly conned.

Everyone came forward, seeking a role in the competing dramas: Bakley's half-brother; the housekeeper and the houseguest; childhood friends; bodyguards; Blake's son ("I never saw my dad hit anyone, push anyone, swing at anyone, beat anyone up"); and Blake's ex-wife, an actress, who called a national press conference to say, *I will not comment*. Bakley's mom sold her story to *The National Enquirer*. ("I can't talk," she told me, "I'm under contract.") Then came the stars from the last celebrity murder, Marcia Clark and Mark Furman and, finally, O.J. Simpson himself ("My first reaction was an immediate feeling of compassion.... Because I knew what he was about to go through. *Don't watch TV, Robert!* I know that watching TV is only going to frustrate him.")

For the first time in years, Blake's fans seemed to pour forth. They surrounded his house and tied balloons and notes to the fence, saying WE LOVE YOU, STAY STRONG and YOUR FANS BELIEVE IN YOU.

BUT IT WAS the victim who emerged as the real star. Her picture appeared nightly on the news and on the front page of the tabloids. Photographers and cameras surrounded the funeral home; helicopters swept down from the sky. The crowds were so great that the casket couldn't be carried outside for weeks. Finally, on May 25, Bakley's body was laid to rest at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in the Hollywood Hills, the resting place of dozens of other stars, including Errol Flynn and Clark Gable.

It was, in a sense, the logical endpoint of America's century-long quest for fame: Bakley had risen to the top of celebrity culture by becoming a victim of it. St. Martins is rushing to publish a book about her and Blake; *Hustler* reportedly plans to publish old nude photographs; and Hollywood scandal tour buses drive by the restaurant where she ate her last meal. There has even been talk of a Hollywood movie. "This is what Bonny always wanted," her sister told me. "*This* is what she died for." ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

The Other Bergman

When I was teaching courses in the history of film style, I naturally included an Ingmar Bergman film, usually *Persona*. In one class where *Persona* was to be shown, I spoke a bit about it, then the projectionist started the film. After ten minutes or so, the projector jammed. I apologized to the class, and the film was started again. At just about the same spot, the projector jammed again, and I apologized again. One young woman put up her hand. "Please stop apologizing," she said. "Seeing those ten minutes twice let me see that Bergman isn't just a great director, he's a great writer." The projector worked fine the third time, but I couldn't be too sorry about those two glitches because they evoked that wonderful remark.

A new book by Bergman made me remember it. The New Press has just published **The Fifth Act** (152 pp., $24.95), which contains a preface, called "Monologue," and three screenplays. Bergman eventually made films of all three, and two of them have been shown here, but this is the first publication of the material in the United States. The book's title sounds as if Bergman were ringing down the curtain—it was first published in Sweden in 1994, when he was seventy-six—but this closure obviously applies only to his directing career; he has kept on writing. He has published several books, some of which he adapted for the screen for others to direct (*Sunday's Children*, *The Best Intentions*, *Private Confessions*). In 1987 and 1990 he published two volumes of autobiography, the first of which, *The Magic Lantern*, is a major work, on the level of his major films. That young woman in my class was right: Bergman needs to be recognized as a writer as well as a director, and this new volume proves it further.

The "Monologue" begins:

> The lights come up.
> Close-up of an older gray-bearded man. During a long silence he regards his invisible audience. He begins to speak in fits and starts. He is no speaker.

Perhaps not, but he is obviously a dramatist—in more than one sense, a self-dramatist. He then tells us what reading has always meant to him. Although he is a slow reader, he says that slowness has been a professional advantage. His first encounter with a dramatic text that he was to direct was always slow and allowed him to "decide on a staging at the first confrontation."

He recounts how in 1940 he began to write plays and how these plays led to employment as a screenwriter (a "script peon" is his term). He succeeded in this new work. "My way into short stories, novels and drama was hermetically sealed. Only film remained." If I made marginal notes, I would have written "Hurrah" there. (Not quite incidentally, this master director tells us that he has been deaf in his right ear since his military service and that his right eye is legally blind. But "in the performance of my profession, I am capable, untiring, orderly." Who disagrees?)

All three of the screenplays in the book address the subjects of theater and film. The one that means the least to me, which I had seen as a film, is the third, *In the Presence of a Clown*. It opens in a psychiatric hospital in 1925. The clown of the title is Death, who is female, in circus dress, and who observes much of the action throughout. The mode is interplay between double personality in a patient and the double life that film provides vis-à-vis reality. A film within the film is to be shown with sound—in 1925 this meant actors speaking behind the screen—but the plan has to be abandoned, and this interior film is performed as a play. The tone of the entire screenplay is wry, rather than grim. (Someone says of a man who is a drinker that "since his wife left, he's got worse." Reply: "On the contrary! Now that he is drinking uninhibitedly he's become quite coherent.") But the apparatus of the screenplay is unwieldy, and the serious elements are themes that Bergman had often treated subtly and that here are italicized.

The middle piece is *The Last Scream: A Slightly Skewed Morality Tale*. It is short—a one-act play that was done on stage before it was filmed—and deals fictionally with two real personages of Swedish film in 1919, a producer named Charles Magnusson and a director named Georg af Klercker. The scene is Magnusson's office. Klercker barrels in full of brio and bonhomie, and in a fourteen-page speech he strips off layer after layer of pretense as he maneuvers for a job, until he ends up on his knees begging. That speech is a tour de force—raunchy, spiteful, brave, desolate—and it includes a pathetic prank. I haven't seen the film, but Christopher Plummer or Albert Finney would scintillate in the speech. Fundamentally it is not mere bravura: it is an apotheosis of the film-maker's dependence on the businessman, of art's reliance on capital. (It reminded me that in 1951, just to keep going before he became a name, Bergman wrote and directed nine soap commercials.)

The first piece in the book, *After the Rehearsal*, is the gem. A masterpiece. Bergman says in the monologue that the career difficulties he describes "were what made me into a passable professional. Other factors have also played a role, and all of that can be found, by the way, in *After the Rehearsal*, which is an honest attempt to be honest." Nonsense. Honesty is easy: any writer with a conscience can be honest. It takes a master like Bergman to perceive that honesty is only one kind of mask or solace, to utilize different perceptions of honesty, to understand that confusion and bewilderment are at the core of truth-seeking. All these elements are in *After the Rehearsal*.

Bergman's medium for his investigation here is the theater: an aging director, a young actress, and her mother, who was also an actress and who appears in what is a flashback of sorts since she is dead. They are all on the stage of an empty theater. The older woman was once the director's mistress, the younger one is herself tempted, and so is he, though he isn't pursuing her. The intersectings of truth and of simulated truth, the collisions and unions and divorces of ego, the musk of sex, sought and needed rather than feared or endured—all are braided in this exquisitely written trio. This piece fixes the ambiance of the theater but goes beyond it to invade us all, to braid desire and time and reticent nobility. (Brief quotation is pointless; long quotation, impractical.) I don't think that I exaggerate in suggesting that *After the Rehearsal* would not be unworthy of Chekhov.

It is not a drama, said some when the film of the piece appeared here. This is true enough in an orthodox sense. It is, however, the sort of drama that meditation brings to the sentient—meditation and memory. The center of the piece is the

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director, and although it all takes place literally after a rehearsal on this stage, the title can be seen as figurative, with everything that has happened so far in his life as a rehearsal for what is to come—life itself as continuing rehearsal for what is ahead.

About the translations. *In the Presence of a Clown* was done by the late Joan Tate, revised by Jonathan Mair. All the other material was translated by Linda Haverty Rugg into lithe English that nonetheless suggests origin in a foreign language, an ideal combination. It is much to the point of Bergman as writer to note that the text of *After the Rehearsal* is more elaborate than the dialogue in the film (whose subtitles were not done by Rugg). Viewing the tape, anyone can see that the actors are speaking less than what is published here. But no printed Bergman screenplay that I know corresponds exactly to the film made of it. (The children in this film, for further instance, are not in the published screenplay.) For a variety of reasons, alterations in a script are usual during the making of a film. But the fact that Bergman has published a much more full version of this screenplay implies that he wants to be considered doubly, as filmmaker and as writer. To read *After the Rehearsal*, after looking again at a tape of this beautiful film, is to celebrate the idea. ■

Robert Brustein on Theater

Contempt for Acting

In recent years, Lipper/Viking has been publishing brief "Penguin Lives" of such figures as Mozart, Proust, Joyce, Melville, Simone Weil, and (in a particularly informative study by R.W.B. Lewis) Dante. Now comes **Marlon Brando** (228 pp., $21.95) by Patricia Bosworth. Brando's inclusion in this series may be an occasion for raised eyebrows. Mine certainly lifted, and not just because the book reads like a celebrity bio by a Brando groupie. (Bosworth, a cultural reporter who has previously rhapsodized about Montgomery Clift, almost loses her breath when she describes, in an epilogue, how "this singular artist" once touched her shoulder.)

It's not as if the entire Penguin list were devoted to "high culture" figures. A book on Crazy Horse is included, and so is a projected one on Elvis Presley. No, if Brando seems misplaced in this company, then, it is because he has so often cheapened and abused his prodigious talent. Profoundly scornful of his profession, indifferent toward his artistry, repelled by his own character, he is in fact so uninterested in his public self that (as Bosworth declared almost proudly in *The New York Times*) he refused to be interviewed for the book. Stella Adler used to speak of the "nobility" of the acting profession. Uta Hagen wrote a book called *Respect for Acting*. For Brando, on the other hand, acting has always triggered the deepest contempt.

The reasons for this have something to do with the man and something to do with the Hollywood culture that spawned and exploited him. Bosworth's most valuable contributions to the Brando-biography industry (twelve books to date, plus the actor's autobiography) are her speculations about the social and psychological conditions that sparked his apparent self-loathing. Brando himself suggested a few reasons in his autobiography, *Songs My Mother Taught Me*, which appeared in 1994. According to Bosworth, he wrote the book primarily in order to snag a $4 million advance from Random House (hard cash has always been a major factor in his creative decisions).

Describing Brando's book, Bosworth characterizes a man "who will not admit even to being a *good* actor.... He seems to want to be thought of as an operator, a prankster, a liar, and a con man." She finds the origins of these feelings in his early history. The Midwestern product of a doting alcoholic mother with stage ambitions and an abusive philandering father who thought that his son would never amount to much, Brando seemed to have had doubts about himself from the very beginning. He also expressed early indifference to an acting career, though there was very little else that he was prepared to do. A high school dropout expelled from military school for going AWOL, he studied with Stella Adler in New York before finding mentors among other graduates of the Group Theater, such as Harold Clurman, Bobby Lewis, Clifford Odets, and especially Elia Kazan, who was responsible for Brando's earliest stage and film triumphs. (Contrary to popular legend, Brando was not trained by Lee Strasberg, whom he disliked intensely but who never hesitated to take credit for his success.)

Brando's stunning performance in Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* literally changed the face of American acting, making vocal mumbling and physical shambling the instruments of a new naturalism, and torn T-shirts a leading item of male fashion. Camille Paglia said that Brando's primary achievement was to liberate "theatrical emotion from its enslavement by words," his wild, sexy, rebellious persona prefiguring "the great art form of the Sixties generation: rock and roll." In an article in 1957 called "America's New Culture Hero," I took the opposite position—namely, that the inarticulate rebel invented by Brando and imitated by so many Actors Studio graduates was an undesirable break not only with traditional classical heroes but also with the eloquent proletarians of Odets.

Whatever the case, Brando's disregard for written speeches, for which he substituted brilliant improvisations, was owing partly to an indifference to text and partly to an effort to wrest his own performances from the control of directors and screenwriters. Occasionally this resulted in some remarkable cinematic moments (notably the "I coulda been a contender" taxicab scene in *On the Waterfront*). But it had the effect of depreciating the power of language in American theater and film, even though Brando was perfectly capable of playing Marc Antony in the film of *Julius Caesar* without a single deviation from the text.

Perhaps because theater, unlike film, is a medium of language, Brando, following the extraordinary success of *Streetcar*, abandoned the American stage for good. Bosworth quotes him as saying, years later: "It's been said I sold out. Maybe that's true—but I knew what I was doing. I've never had any respect for Hollywood. It stands for greed, avarice, phoniness, crassness—but when you act in a movie, you act for three months and then you can do what you want for the rest of the year." This was an unfortunate decision, because Brando was poised to become

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one of the truly great stage actors of the century, in a class with Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, Ian Holm, John Barrymore, and Fredric March. But his professional laziness was not fueled by a desire to loll by the pool of his house on Mulholland Drive or to lie on the sands of his Polynesian atoll, where he built a hotel after filming *Mutiny on the Bounty*. He wanted time between films to occupy himself with political causes. Although he admired the transformational genius of a character actor such as Paul Muni, he wasn't sure that acting was a profession worthy of a man.

That may be why he became such a royal pain in the ass on stage and movie sets, feuding with Jessica Tandy in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and with Anthony Quinn in *Viva Zapata!*; chewing garlic during his love scenes with Tallulah Bankhead in *The Eagle Has Two Heads*; demanding a shorter workday so that he could pay daily visits to his therapist; infuriating such dedicated directors as Carol Reed, Bernardo Bertolucci, Gillo Pontecorvo, and Francis Ford Coppola with his irritating tactics; using cue cards and hearing aids as devices to receive the lines that he refused to memorize; gorging himself, to the point of bursting, on steaks, Brie, and ice cream until, having ballooned into a Macy's Thanksgiving Day float, he could be photographed only in shadow in *Apocalypse Now*; demanding huge amounts of money for very little work (he asked for so much to reprise the role of Don Vito Corleone in *Godfather II* that he was written out of the script).

Brando was at constant war with studio heads, and by 1970, already overweight and depressed, he was considered unemployable even by permissive Hollywood standards. For a while, he tried to control his acting fate by starting his own production company, Pennebaker Inc., to make movies, in his words, "that had social value and would improve the world." With its finances mismanaged by his father and its products mismanaged by Brando, the enterprise went bankrupt, and the world was forced to wait a little longer for improvement.

The always prescient Harold Clurman provided the deepest insights into Brando's lax attitude toward his craft: "There is something in Marlon that *resents* acting, yet he cannot help but be an actor. He thinks acting 'sickly.' He'd rather 'do something for the world.'... However, his innermost core, secret even to himself, can find an outlet only through acting. And it is precisely because his acting has its source in suffering, the display of which he unwittingly resists, that it acquires its enormous power."

Brando's efforts to "do something for the world" proved even less successful than his independent film ventures. In his various, continuously changing political allegiances, he became the epitome of the guilty, self-lacerating white man. After appearing in the pro-Israeli play *A Flag Is Born*, he declared himself a passionate advocate of the Jewish state. A few years later he enthusiastically embraced the Palestinian cause. He became so deeply engaged in the civil rights movement that he decided to give up acting and devote himself to raising money for CORE and Martin Luther King Jr., until James Farmer rejected him as another knee-jerk liberal. Then for a short time he joined the ranks of the radical chic by supporting Bobby Seale and the Black Panthers, financing rallies and making racially self-abasing speeches. ("You've been listening to white people for four hundred years, and they haven't done a thing. Now I'm going to begin right now informing white people what they don't know.") He quickly extricated himself from the movement when Eldridge Cleaver began exhorting his followers to kill their parents.

Not that Brando didn't have fantasies about killing his own father (a love-hate relationship that Bosworth identifies as "the central drama in the actor's life"). "I used to think," he said after Marlon Senior died, "'God, just give him to me alive for eight seconds ... because I want to break his jaw.' I wanted to smash his face and watch him spit out his teeth. I wanted to kick his balls into his throat. I wanted to rip his ears off and eat them in front of him...." Apparently Brando's passion for universal peace and justice did not extend to his closest relatives.

When offered an Academy Award for his brilliant performance in *The Godfather*, Brando famously refused to accept it, sending Princess Sacheen Littlefeather up to the podium to read a fifteen-page speech to a booing crowd (only two minutes of it were televised) protesting the way the film industry treated American Indians. Later, putting his money where her mouth was, he poured a good deal of his vast movie fees into AIM (the American Indian Movement), until some Indians, suspicious of his motives, repudiated him as a mere publicity-seeker. His career is, in short, virtually a history of fellow traveling with a wide range of postwar radical activist movements, his momentary enthusiasms quickly followed by fatigue and disillusionment.

As for Brando's countless sexual relationships, they, too, were usually short-lived entanglements. "Most of the women in my life," he boasted, "have been women of color." Or at least that was his intention. He produced nine legitimate children (and uncounted illegitimate ones) with a number of wives and mistresses bearing exotic names like Movita and Tarita. His first wife, Anna Kashfi, professed to be a Darjeeling Buddhist of East Indian heritage, but she later turned out to be Irish. They were divorced soon after. Indeed, just about the only consistent relationship in his life was his friendship with his fellow Nebraskan Wally ("Mr. Peepers") Cox.

Brando's penchant for misadventure and his vulnerability to hucksterism are admittedly the stuff of comedy, but they had tragic consequences, particularly on his family. Circumstances of divorce and career made it difficult for Brando to spend much time with his children, though he was so opposed to their becoming actors that he cheered when one decided to work as a masseur. Another served for a while as a bodyguard for Michael Jackson. Christian, the child whom he loved most (named for the character he played in *Mutiny on the Bounty*), is still serving time in prison for the murder of the lover of his sister Cheyenne (named for Brando's favorite Indian tribe). Cheyenne's fate was even more depressing. She bore her murdered lover's posthumous son, who proved to be addicted to drugs at birth, then hanged herself after being denied custody of the child. Thus Brando experienced the worst pain a parent can suffer—which is to outlive your own child.

He did not outlive his acting gifts, though he certainly continued to abuse them. F. Scott Fitzgerald called himself a poor caretaker of his talents. As caretaker of his own talents, Brando respected them so little that he did not even bother to mow the lawn or lock the doors. "A movie star is nothing important," he once told *Time* magazine. "Freud, Gandhi, Marx—these people are important. Movie acting is just dull, boring, childish work. Everybody acts—when we want something, when we want someone to do something; we act all the time." Considering this attitude, it is a wonder that Brando was able to create so many movie performances of power and originality, notably in *Streetcar*, *Viva Zapata!*, *On the Waterfront*, *Last Tango in Paris*, and, pre-eminently, *The Godfather*, in which—using a triangular mouthpiece to push out his cheeks, a latex mask of lines and wrinkles, and a rasping voice that gave the impression that he'd once been shot in the throat—he proved that he was not just a screen star but a great transforming actor in the tradition of his idol Paul Muni.

The sadness of Brando's career is that he matured in the age of the Actors Studio, with its emphasis on personality acting and movie star ambitions, and not at the time of the Group Theater, which, for

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nine years in the 1930s, was devoted to bringing artistic dignity to the tawdry American stage. This committed acting company, whose icons were Stanislavsky and Marx, managed to wed a passionate theatrical aesthetic to a passionate social idealism. Under the leadership of Harold Clurman, actors such as Stella and Luther Adler, John Garfield, Lee J. Cobb, Franchot Tone, Frances Farmer, and others were able to subordinate their own career drives for a while to the ongoing development of an art theater. But by the time Brando appeared on the theater scene, this noble effort to develop a committed ensemble of actors and directors had failed, and its members had been absorbed into a world that they all despised. Unable to resist the pressures of the culture, most of them (Clurman included, for a time) ended up in Hollywood. Although Brando continued to seek his mentors among the graduates of the Group Theater, that shining ephemeral moment of artistic idealism had already passed.

It was a time when the communist god, worshipped by many in the Group Theater, had failed as well. The people whom Brando had most admired, notably Kazan and Odets, were naming names to the House Un-American Activities Committee in order to keep their Hollywood jobs, and a community of artists who, despite their aesthetic quarrels, were once a tight-knit band were now turning on one another in rage. (Brando later resented the fact that he had been used, through the character he played in *On the Waterfront*, to justify Kazan's finking on Group Party members such as Paula Strasberg and J. Edward Bromberg.)

If Brando fails to respect acting, it is partly because he lives in a society that respects only stardom. In America actors are not rewarded with knighthoods or peerages or Academy rosettes. The best that they can hope for is a shiny metal statuette whose sexless appearance contrasts with the abundance of semi-naked meat on display at the Academy Award ceremonies.

Still, actors bear some responsibility for the direction of their careers. The best actors in this country still recognize their obligation to the art they serve. They do this by continuing to work with resident companies—often at significant sacrifice of fame and fortune—or by returning intermittently to the stage between movie assignments. Brando, who had the capacity to revolutionize the American theater, kept his theatrical mutinies confined to the Bounty, preferring to pour his great talents not into great repertory roles but into a series of trivial films. In his current advanced state of bloat, he is now capable of playing only Falstaff.

Kierkegaard remarked that "he who forfeits his calling forfeits his right to live." This is admittedly a harsh judgment on those who live in a world characterized by such seductive opportunities and material rewards. Marlon Brando did not forfeit his calling so much as neglect and insult it. That he did so partly to make room for altruistic political activities makes the outcome no less saddening. ■

Identity politics as guerrilla war.

The View From La Realidad

By ENRIQUE KRAUZE

I.

HE IS NOW perhaps the most famous Mexican in history: more famous than Emiliano Zapata or Pancho Villa, certainly more famous than Octavio Paz, more famous than any actor or athlete. Vicente Fox may be his equal in celebrity for the moment, but his renown as a popular hero bears comparison to Evita Perón's, and his aura as a revolutionary icon may one day shine as bright as that of Che Guevara, his personal hero and patron saint. I refer, of course, to Subcomandante Marcos, the mestizo leader of the Indians in Chiapas.

On January 1, 1994, the Mexican public woke up to an incredible piece of news. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the success of the peace process in Nicaragua and El Salvador—and decades after the disappearance of the short-lived guerrilla movements of the 1960s and 1970s—it was difficult to imagine the reappearance of a guerrilla force in Mexico. After all, we had just concluded the NAFTA agreement with the United States and Canada, and it seemed that we were launched on the fast track to modernity. But the sudden appearance of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas was an even greater surprise because this was more than a political rebellion: it was a classical revolt, as Octavio Paz understood the peasant movement of the Mexican Revolution, a "return to roots"—a resurgence of the past, and in this case a resurgence of the most ancient of all pasts, the indigenous past.

Since then, news of the Zapatista movement, and the writings of its leader, now available in English in a sanctimonious volume called *Our Word Is Our Weapon*, have appeared regularly on the front pages of national newspapers and in the international press. The resolution of the conflict in Chiapas is one of the national priorities of Vicente Fox's new government. Yet peace seems still a remote and elusive prospect. Its attainment depends on many factors, foremost among them the collective will of the armed Indian Zapatistas of the Selva Lacandona. But the opinion of their leader—of the masked crusader Marcos—carries much weight with them. This is the way it has been at other moments in Mexican history, a history that at times seems like a social projection of the personal stories of its leaders and presidents, its men in power. That is why a proper understanding of the character of the revolutionary behind the mask may supply a key to the proper interpretation of the Zapatista movement as a whole.

"Everything in Chiapas is Mexico": so proclaimed a tourist slogan coined by the government of Chiapas at the beginning of the 1980s. One of the positive effects of the Zapatista rebellion that began in January, 1994 was that it alerted the Mexican consciousness to the falseness of that statement. It is true that Mexico is not, except in some areas, a genuinely modern country, but very little in Chiapas is characteristic of Mexico. A truer assertion would be: "Everything in Chiapas is Peru."

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OUR WORD IS OUR WEAPON: SELECTED WRITINGS
by Subcomandante Marcos
edited by
Juana Ponce de Leon
(Seven Stories Press,
456 pp., $27.95)

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Yes, Peru. At the historical surface, the two great viceroyalties seem similar in their origins and in their fates: both were the cradles of great civilizations, and both suffered traumatic conquests; both endured a long colonial siesta, during which they were materially and spiritually dependent on Spain. In the nineteenth century, Peru and Mexico experienced independence movements, drafted liberal constitutions, lost wars with their neighbors, and alternated dictatorial regimes with democratic interludes. There would seem to have been no significant difference between the story of Mexico and the story of Peru until the twentieth century, when Peru continued to persist in the old pattern and displayed no social and political uprising to match the Mexican Revolution, which was the most important social and political movement of the first half of the century in Latin America.

But a closer look reveals that the differences between Peru and Mexico are greater and deeper, and date to the time of the Spanish conquest. In Mexico, the defeat of the Mexicas (as the Aztecs called themselves) was bloody, and indigenous tribes hostile to the Mexicas participated in their murder; Franciscans and missionaries from other orders arrived quickly to alleviate to some extent the sense of loss and the extreme distress of the kingdoms that had been conquered. In Peru, by contrast, the struggle of the colonialists was long, relentless, and brutal—a cataclysm unmitigated by spiritual relief. The image of Túpac Amaru in 1581, defeated and converted to Christianity and nevertheless beheaded by the Spanish conquerors before his people, would not be erased from the memory of the indigenous population. It would survive through the centuries in the symbols and the legends of millenarian redemption.

Two hundred years later, in 1780, the rebellion of the next Túpac Amaru, the legendary mestizo leader opposed to the modernizing measures of the Bourbons, exploded. His death and his dismemberment would renew the desire for revenge that flowered in the remote highlands of Puno and the Andes. Around 1956, as Mario Vargas Llosa has recalled, the writer and anthropologist José María Arguedas documented the fascinating myth of the "Incarri" (the word is a fusion of Inca and *rey*, or king): the battered head of the Inca king lies on the surface, but below the body silently re-shapes itself to avenge the bitter defeat of its people and to reconstitute an archaic utopia.

It was not just history that caused the formation in Peru of two opposing nations, one white and the other Indian; it was also geography and demography. Around 1900, eighty percent of the population lived in the mountains, without contact with the white minority of the coast. By then, discrimination and hatred had begun to flourish in Peru. The official insistence on terms such as *cholo* (mestizo), *indio*, *negro*, and *chino* revealed—and still reveals—the everyday reality of Peruvian racism. This is what Vargas Llosa has described as "the savage nomenclature that decides most individual fates, and is preserved thanks to a constant effervescence of prejudices and sentiments—disdain, scorn, envy, resentment, admiration, imitation—that constitutes, beneath ideologies, values, and antivalues, the deepest explanation of the conflicts and frustrations of Peruvian life."

Around 1915, a young Peruvian named José Carlos Mariátegui witnessed from afar the explosion of a new "seismic wave" in Peruvian history, the rebellion of Rumi Maqui, or Stone Hand, as he was called by his hopeful followers, the Indians of Puno. Rumi Maqui, a mestizo general whose real name was Teodomiro Gutiérrez Cuevas, had composed a report on the desolate situation of the region, and was so struck by the magnitude of its historic grievances that he ended up leading a movement to avenge them. The aim of his uprising—similar to those which had been occurring for decades—was the restoration of the Tahuantinsuyo, an order that was not mythical or wreathed in the mists of time but rather incarnated in real rulers, the Incas; and of a tangible capital, Cuzco; and of a once vital and happy way of life, the supposedly hunger-free and exploitation-free kingdom of Andean culture.

Mariátegui was born in 1894 in Moquegua, in the volcanic south of Peru. His father, a government worker descended from a hero of independence and anticlerical ancestors, soon abandoned his wife—a mestiza and a Catholic—and his children, condemning them to a life of poverty and privation. To make matters worse, as a child José Carlos was in an accident that left him lame. A voracious and self-taught reader, mystically inclined and retiring by nature, he soon became a writer. Writing about Rumi Maqui under the pseudonym Juan Croniqueur, he experienced a revelation: that the old can be the new, that "the revolution has restored our oldest traditions."

A little while later, between 1919 and 1923, as a succession of political earthquakes with their epicenter in the mountains came to disturb the peace of mind in the safe haven of Lima, Mariátegui underwent a rapid conversion, not in Peru but in Italy. There he attended the founding of the Communist Party and witnessed the workers' strikes in Turin. He also participated in the activities of the Italian avant-garde—especially the surrealist movement—that was defying and dismantling the rigid structures of bourgeois culture and bourgeois society. "Superrealism," he wrote, "is a stage in the preparation for true realism, [...] the freeing of the imagination, the liberation of fiction from its old bonds, the discovery of reality." The young Peruvian in Italy knew and admired the classics of Marxism, though his initiation into the doctrine was not orthodox but eccentric: he met Gramsci and Croce, and threw himself into the study of Sorel.

Upon his return to Peru in 1923, Mariátegui embarked on one of the most remarkable intellectual trajectories of the twentieth century in Latin America. It was remarkable not just for its range—his collected works consist of twenty volumes in many genres, on a wide variety of subjects in art, literature, and politics—but also for the sense of social responsibility that animated it. In 1926, and until his early death in 1930, Mariátegui headed the legendary journal *Amauta*, which he founded. It was not only the most polished editorial expression of literary indigenism in Latin American history, but also the crucible of a generation of intellectuals committed to the radical reformation of their society.

Mariátegui's essential contribution was the linking of indigenism with Marxism. "I confess," he wrote in a polemic with essayist Luis Alberto Sánchez, "that I have come to a comprehension, to an understanding of the meaning of the indigenous in our times, not by the path of bookish erudition or aesthetic intuition, not even by the path of theoretical speculation, but by the path—at once intellectual, sentimental and practical—of socialism." In an illuminating prologue to his *Seven Essays on the Interpretation of Peruvian Reality*, which appeared in 1928, Mariátegui rejected any administrative, judicial, religious, pedagogical, or even economic reform—such as public works or hospitals—for the resolution of the indigenous question. The initial step had to be radical and complete: agrarian reform. "The land has always been the one true joy of the Indian," he wrote. "The Indian is wedded to the earth. He feels that 'life comes from the earth' and returns to the earth."

It was necessary to eradicate *gamonalismo* (the cacique system, which concentrated large landholdings and an almost absolute power in the paternal figure of a cacique who bestowed favors in return for

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obedience) in Peru. "The existing Peruvian economy and society," he observed, "maintains the original sin of conquest, the sin of having been brought forth and formed without and against the Indian." Mariátegui proposed to adopt the principles of the Mexican Revolution (which he admired at first, though he later criticized it for its alleged bourgeois lapses). Although he did not live to see the success of agrarian reform in Mexico under President Lázaro Cárdenas, he certainly would have understood it as an intermediate stage along the way to the true redemption.

"WE CERTAINLY DO NOT wish socialism in America to be a copy and an imitation. It must be a heroic creation," Mariátegui proclaimed. "We must give life to an Indo-American socialism reflecting our own reality and in our own language." His objective was "the reconstruction of Peru on an Indian foundation." But Mariátegui's ideology of Marxism-indigenism had a religious inflection. The revolution that he imagined was not only economic, it was also spiritual. "The strength of the revolutionaries," he wrote in 1925, "does not lie in their science but in their faith, in their passion, in their will. It is a religious, mystical, spiritual force. It is the force of myth." From Gramsci he had assimilated the importance of culture, and more particularly the importance of intellectuals, in the forging of the revolutionary spirit. That is why he participated in the founding of the Renaissance Group in Cuzco, which channeled the rebellious impulses of the student movements of the 1910s in Peru (echoing the University Reform movement of Córdoba in Argentina in 1918) and established the first contacts between writers and community leaders.

From the avant-garde movements, Mariátegui learned the subversive power of the word and the image, and how to marry art, reason, and revolution in defense of a higher reality and a better future. From the revolutionary modernists he also imbibed a deep contempt for bourgeois life. But finally his appreciation of culture as an instrument of revolution was owed to Sorel, from whom Mariátegui derived the need for a "new language" and the "perennial value of myth in popular movements." In this spirit, he embarked on "the creation of a concrete fantasy that works on a scattered and downtrodden people to revive and to direct their collective will." But his enterprise would not be realized in Peru in his time, and certainly not in the Peru of the 1980s, when the most radical guerrilla force in the history of Latin America took its name from a line by Mariátegui: the Shining Path. It would be realized in Mexico in our time.

IT WAS IN Chiapas, the southern region of Mexico that has so little to do with Mexico, the Peru of Mexico, that the Marxist-indigenist program devised by Mariátegui was finally acted upon. In the strife-torn region of Los Altos of Chiapas and in the Selva Lacandona in 1990, the Indians comprised seventy-nine percent of the population, similar to that of Peru at the time of Rumi Maqui. By contrast, thirty-three percent of the population of San Cristóbal de las Casas (the Lima of Chiapas) was Indian. The conditions were comparable: the same dual demographics; the same geography of hate—the white city and the Indian highlands; the same weak historical role played by the Catholic Church; the same hierarchical and savage nomenclature. In Chiapas as in Peru, certain words, such as *indio* or *ladino*, are in common use and charged with a hatred and discriminatory force not evident in other parts of Mexico. In Chiapas, in 1712 and 1867, on the same territory occupied by today's Zapatistas, there were two bloody Indian rebellions against the white minority with the object of restoring the ancient Indian kingdom and religion.

Elsewhere in Mexico, except in a few places, and despite the vast machinery of indigenist myth-making (which is as exaggerated and as false as the myth-making of Hispanism), the racial problem has been reasonably resolved since the nineteenth century, by a process of mingling and convergence that is not just ethnic but also cultural. This culture of mixing has been the distinctive characteristic of Mexico with respect to its counterparts throughout America, its extraordinary accomplishment. It is significant that the Mexican Revolution, a decade-long social earthquake, was not animated by race, but by economic nationalism and the drive for social equality.

Everywhere else in Mexico, too, the problem of the land—"the elimination of feudalism," as Mariátegui called it—was attacked at the roots in the way that the Peruvian thinker had hoped it would be, so that there was even a restoration on public land of "the elements of practical socialism that [existed in] indigenous agriculture and life." And if the great land reform that Cárdenas initiated in 1936—by buying out the large landowners and dividing eighteen million hectares, ten percent of the country, among three million landless peasants—fell short of achieving a state of general well-being, at least it provided a social and moral vindication for peasants of remote or recent indigenous origin. To understand the rebellion in Chiapas properly, it is important to recognize that both these developments—*mestizaje* and agrarian reform—occurred late and only partially in Chiapas, as in Peru. And in both places, unfortunately, ethnic hatred still disrupts the course of daily existence.

II.

FOR SEVEN YEARS now, Peru and Chiapas have had something else in common: the mythical presence of a Mexican Rumi Maqui as foretold by José Carlos Mariátegui, the evangelist of the "spirit of the dawn." In Chiapas, this millennial figure is known as Subcomandante Marcos. "The hopes of the indigenous peoples are absolutely revolutionary," wrote Mariátegui. This is precisely what Marcos intuited, perhaps without having read the words of his Peruvian predecessor; and this is precisely what he put into practice.

This was not his original plan. "Before 1994," Marcos has declared, "no one had conceived of an indigenous movement." And certainly not the subcomandante himself. He was born Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente, in Tampico, a port city on the Gulf of Mexico, in 1957. He has recounted that he "grew up and was educated" in the "traditional left of the underground." His intellectual training in Althusser, Foucault, and the other radical scriptures of the day, and his youthful association with the Frente de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Front), predisposed him to the familiar rigidities of academic and revolutionary Marxism; to dogma and guns.

Yet early in his life—if we may trust the meager information that is available about the masked, pipe-smoking superstar of Chiapas—there were certain eccentric elements in his development, influences that would be very useful to him in his revolutionary career, of the sort that would have thrilled Mariátegui. His father was a reader of Balzac, a humanist businessman who owned a chain of furniture stores that fell on hard times when the market opened up. (Rafael devised a mildly anti-capitalist slogan for his father's business: "Visit us and re-live the old-fashioned pleasure of giving.") He received a strict Catholic education, like Mariátegui. Most important of all, he showed artistic and cultural inclinations.

The young Guillén made speeches, and dressed up as a magician, and published a literary magazine premonitorily titled *The Hidden Root*, and sang songs by the popular Catalan singer Joan Manuel Serrat, and devoured the socially and morally engaged work of the Spanish poets León Felipe and Miguel Hernández, and

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showed films, and built sets, and directed plays, and was an accomplished actor. At UNAM, the national university that he attended between 1977 and 1981, he managed to survive the usually lethal study of Althusser. His saving grace—rare in a revolutionary—was his humor: not mere irony, but a gift for the discovery of the ridiculous in human beings, beginning with himself.

Guillén's graduate dissertation on textbooks as instruments of power (signed and dated "somewhere very near the university campus") and his shift toward graphic design—the making of posters, the composition of bulletins and pamphlets, and later the teaching of design in support of popular causes—may be seen as the embryonic beginnings of a revolutionary practice based on cultural criticism and artistic creation. In this regard, Marcos was truly a belated revolutionary of the 1920s, when Russian, European, and especially Italian artists had put visual arts and design at the service of the revolution. Perhaps the subcomandante's great popularity with the Italian left has its origin in this remote connection.

IT IS KNOWN that Guillén was in Nicaragua at the beginning of the 1980s, first with his teacher Alberto Híjar (a professor of aesthetics and Marxism) as a participant in a series of cultural courses, and later in the village of San Juan, where he is remembered for his austerity: "he was reserved and well-educated ... almost priestly." His next stopping point was Cuba, where he appears to have acquired not only his knowledge of the art and the "science" of guerrilla warfare, but also his acquaintance with the revolutionary hero that he wished to imitate. A veteran of the Cuban revolution who met him at the time, a friend and comrade of Che in his adventures in Africa and Bolivia, has said that Guillén "wanted to know every little thing about Che's life in the mountains, in Bolivia, in Africa: what he read, how he wrote, what he ate, how he distributed food, how he smoked his pipe, what tobacco he used, how he practiced medicine in the villages.... He even wanted to know how he breathed!"

It was not for nothing that an important Cuban official, upon meeting him in Havana in 1982, remarked that "this is a new Che." In fact, when he arrived in the Selva Lacandona in 1983, Guillén (who had probably already adopted the name of Marcos in honor of a guerrilla fallen in battle who taught him Mexican history) wore the Che beret, smoked a pipe, told the Indians that he was a doctor, and handed out medicine. But his Guevaran inspiration went beyond mimicry; it was the very essence of the guerrilla movement that he founded in Chiapas. This time the light of revolution, the *foco*, would shine steady—not just because the local geography (the impenetrable jungle) was ripe for such tactics, but also because the local population, the indigenous community of the Chiapas highlands and especially of Las Cañadas, in the Selva Lacandona, was ripe for revolt.

Che, you see, had forgotten his Mariátegui. To create the ideal conditions for the birth of the "new man," to awaken the "man of the dawn," it was not enough to preach a revolutionary gospel to the peasants, or to practice it with them. The peasants had to be peasants of a particular kind: they had to be indigenous. In this sense, the cultural conditions for revolution were even more significant than the political conditions. More specifically, indigenous peasants of the Peruvian variety were necessary: people who were cosmically aggrieved by five hundred years of oppression and charged with a zeal for redemption.

Marcos did not have to preach this gospel of redemption—for more than ten years he could concentrate on the military objective, which in Mexico was Marxist revolution—because the political-theological ground had already been prepared. Since 1971, the ideological instruction of the Indians had been the work of the diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas, which was headed by the bishop Don Samuel Ruiz. In what became the most successful experiment in liberation theology in Latin America, "Don Samuel," assisted by Dominican, Marist, and Jesuit priests, created a network of eight thousand Indian "catechists" who carried "the word of God"—in essence, a Marxist interpretation of the Gospel—around the region.

The pamphlets that they distributed called the indigenous communities "the new children of Israel," a people oppressed by world capitalism and its lackeys, the Latin American governments. In many cases, these writings explicitly supported the guerrilla fighters of Central America. When Marcos, with the support of Don Samuel, came to the communities of the Selva Lacandona, the Indians were mentally and spiritually prepared to embark on a long guerrilla campaign. Without this local indigenous elite, primed for the struggle for salvation, the *foco* in Chiapas would have been extinguished immediately.

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III.

TO HIS LITERARY mentor, the writer Carlos Monsiváis, Marcos declared: "The EZLN is preparing for January 1 1994, but not for January 2." For once he was speaking plainly, without masks, and giving the history of his campaign correctly. On January 1, he took over the leadership of what was just one more guerrilla force, one more Marxist army, in the history of Latin America. But by January 2, public opinion in Mexico and abroad was regarding the Zapatistas as something very different: as an Indian revolt.

When a spellbound Marcos videotaped the Indians who, on October 12, 1992, pulled down the statue of the conquistador Diego de Mazariegos in San Cristóbal, he did not yet realize that he was a character out of Mariátegui. He still believed that he was a revolutionary descended from those bred in the Russian universities of the nineteenth century, or a latter-day Che in training. To be sure, he was already writing texts suffused with the rhetoric of redemption, which owe their tone and

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even their imagery to the indigenous world that for almost a decade had welcomed and sheltered him. A powerful piece written in August 1992 and published in January 1994 (it is included in *Our Word Is Our Weapon*) explains this process of mimesis. It is called "A Storm and a Prophecy":

> Everyone is dreaming in this country. Now it is time to wake up....
>
> The storm is here. From the clash of these two winds a storm will be born. Its time has arrived. Now the wind from above rules, but the wind from below is coming....
>
> The prophecy is here: When the storm calms, when rain and fire again leave the country in peace, the world will no longer be the world, but something better.

The truth is that in the first EZLN communiqués the indigenist message was not stressed. Zapatistas talked about socialism. Then all of a sudden, just after the January 1 announcement, to his own astonishment and to the astonishment of a broad cross section of the Mexican public, Marcos noticed that "something new has been born," "something else." This something was not just the growing public sympathy for the rebels, or the general repudiation of those, such as Fidel Velázquez, the old working-class leader of the PRI, who called for "the extermination of the masked men." It was the sudden recurrence at the end of the twentieth century of an old theme, an old Latin American or Indo-American prophecy, or melody: not only the "word of God," but also, and mainly, the Indian and revolutionary word of Mariátegui.

From that Mariátegiuan epiphany on, Marcos and the Zapatistas, exquisitely sensitive to the power of the media and capitalizing on the fortuitous appearance of the Internet, have made excellent use of high-tech communications (their hostility to capitalism notwithstanding), and in this way they have secured for the indigenous question a prominent place on the international agenda. They have succeeded also in linking indigenism directly to two powerful political currents: multiculturalism and the worldwide anti-globalization crusade. In 1996, in a message from the EZLN to the American planning committee of the Intercontinental Meeting for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, Marcos proclaimed: "We are neoliberalism's maximum defiance, the most beautiful absurdity, the most irrelevant delirium, the most human madness." For Marcos, neoliberalism is the great evil of the post-colonial world. In his closing remarks at that meeting, he castigated neoliberalism in biblical terms, cursing it as a supra-totalitarian power: "In the world of those who live and kill for Power there is no room for human beings ... slavery or death is the choice their world offers all worlds."

WOULD MARIÁTEGUI HAVE been horrified to see the media used this way to advance the indigenous cause? Not at all. He would have loved it. It accords perfectly with the surrealist techniques that he preached for the demolition of bourgeois society, and with his proposal for a creative return to indigenous origins. There are many other elements of Zapatismo that he would have applauded in the Gramscian creativity of Marcos's cultural revolution: the mask, for example. The black wool in which Marcos's head is always swaddled is an extraordinary invention, a symbol with all the advantages of a wonderful brand: different, mysterious, simple, cheap, useful, reproducible in itself or on posters and T-shirts. As an instrument of revolutionary marketing, its success was assured, because this was an instrument truly "made in Mexico," a country in which the mask has been a vital cultural artifact for centuries. Until Marcos, no one in Mexico had thought of using it to achieve this particular effect.

The next revelation took place in the discourse itself, especially in response to a question that was the title of a significant statement by Marcos published in newspapers on January 18, 1994, after the government had offered him a pardon and amnesty. His message was simple and thoroughly indigenist: the Indians, oppressed for five hundred years, had done nothing that required forgiveness. "What do they have to forgive us for?" The echo in the left-wing press and from university podiums was immediate, and it has been sustained more or less intensely for seven years. Here was a writer somewhere out in the jungle, a lyrical poet and a weaver of intricate moral fables reminiscent of Quixote and praised by Octavio Paz himself, a powerful pamphleteer in the grand eighteenth-century tradition, a true storyteller—and a mediocre essayist, uneven, prolific, sentimental, always didactic, precious, moralistic, Manichaean, preachy, sarcastic, at times necrophiliac (Castro said that he talked too much about death), but always a writer.

Many of the writings collected in *Our Word Is Our Weapon* are entirely the products of their occasions and circumstances. They were effective in their moment but they wilt inside a book, because they lose the uncertainty and the intensity of their moment. The biblical tone of the collection is also pronounced: Marcos doubtless learned much from his Jesuit teachers, and his American publishers are happy to take his words as scriptural. His use of quotations, especially from poetry, is quite natural, and ranges from Shakespeare to Lewis Carroll, from Paul Éluard to Neruda, through pop culture, the indigenous oral tradition, Walt Disney, comic books, and the Latin American writers of the left: a real postmodern cocktail.

Despite his talent, however, the writer in Marcos is only incidental. It is quite plain that his literary skills are wholly at the service of the cause. The opposite was true of his master Mariátegui, who was an authentic writer of the avant-garde: rigorous, well-informed, original. His writings on literature and art read just as well now as they did in 1928. They have not lost their interest or their relevance.

Until now, the Mexican left has been more cultural, academic, and intellectual than social or political; but Marcos's symbolism and literary discourse have been truly political, truly revolutionary. Within Mexico's borders, they have roused several indigenous groups outside of Chiapas and put them on alert. Outside of Mexico, they have managed to liberate the Western left from the trauma of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Consider, as an example of the excitement about Marcos, the great writer José Saramago, who is the author of the very pious prologue to *Our Word Is Our Weapon*. In this essay, Saramago compares the Mexican attitude toward the Indians to the bemusement of the Europeans of the Enlightenment in their encounters with the Persians, suggesting that Mexico is a society resistant to cultural pluralism. This is not just an exaggeration, it is a lie. Cultural pluralism is the defining characteristic of Mexico's history.

For Saramago, however, Chiapas is the new Jerusalem, the Zapatistas are the children of Israel, Marcos is their savior, Don Samuel is John the Baptist, and Saramago himself is—presumably—one of the apostles. He is not alone in this belief: highly respected intellectuals from all over the West are of the same mind. "Marcos has earned his indignation like few men alive," Norman Mailer teaches on the jacket of *Our Word Is Our Weapon*. Kurt Vonnegut likens Marcos to "our own Tom Paine." After the fall of the Berlin Wall, these celebrity utopians need a new address for their fantasies: if this address had not presented itself, they would have invented another one.

Saramago, at least, has visited Chiapas many times. But in his wanderings in the indigenist land he has seen only what he wants to see: a polarized society of Indians and soldiers. What he has *not* observed is the complicated reality of the place, a predominantly Indian society sharply divided for many political, religious, economic,

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and cultural reasons. Through his warping ideological lens, Saramago sees Mexico as a country split between exploited Indians and non-Indian exploiters. The truth lies elsewhere: Mexico has been a predominantly mixed-race country (ninety percent of the population) since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Its biggest problems are decidedly not racial. They are social and economic: specifically, poverty and inequality.

IN KEEPING WITH the doctrine of his Peruvian predecessor, Marcos has flourished with an appeal to Mexican history, which he has called "our historical safeguard": the explicit, almost cinematic link with the original Zapatismo (1910–1919), but also with many other moments, figures, and episodes of the Mexican Revolution. The congress that he convoked in 1994, for example, took place in a spot in the jungle that Marcos re-named Aguascalientes. Acting as the editor of living history, Marcos intended to recreate the convention of 1914 in the city of Aguascalientes, the high point of the struggle of popular leaders Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata against Venustiano Carranza's more conservative forces.

Marcos regularly situates himself in the Mexican tradition of revolution, as if to borrow legitimacy from the very country with which he is at war. Since his first communiqué from the Selva Lacandona on January 2, 1994, his historical references have been constant: the commandants are "insurgents," they are like Hidalgo and Morelos, the leaders of the independence movement and the country's founding fathers. Marcos's own models are the leaders of the revolution: Villa, but especially Zapata, around whom Marcos has fabricated a legend. Meshing Zapata's struggle for land with an ancient Mayan belief about the first man (called "Votán," which means "the hearth of the people") sent by God to divide up the earth, Marcos created a spirit called "Votán Zapata," who incarnates all the popular heroes of Mexico: "He is and he is not everything in us... he is walking ... Votán Zapata ... keeper of the night ... master of the mountain ... he is one and all. No one and all. The guardian and hearth of the people."

A postmodern guerrilla, Gabriel Zaid has called Marcos. There is a movie director behind this rebel's mask, a film-maker waiting to seize his opportunity and exchange his mask for a camera. His life is his best movie. In his interview with Monsiváis, Marcos made this plain. He called for a Gramscian program for the regeneration of the left that will enable it to confront the neoliberal hegemony—"The problem facing the left is the construction of a cultural, historical, intellectual, and political framework. That is where there is a need for intellectual labor.... We believe that the intellectual, progressive left must work to clear a path for itself. The challenge is great and richly rewarding" and so on—all pretty banal stuff, except that it ends on the subcomandante's characteristic note: "And not just on an intellectual level, but on a cultural level as well, in film." It is no wonder that Marcos has attracted the attention of Oliver Stone.

IV.

LA REALIDAD: this is the name that Marcos has given to the small village where he has his headquarters. The name expresses a certain hope and a certain arrogance. The problem is that La Realidad is not the same thing as reality. It is one thing to create a myth, and it is quite another thing to operate in a de-mythified world. I do not mean to suggest that there is no reality at all to Marcos's *Realidad*: the indigenous peoples whom he purports to lead are actual and aggrieved, and they are led by an extraordinarily creative and determined man. But how does Reality translate into reality?

Marcos is many things, but he is not an ideologue. Mariátegui prescribed agrarian reform for Peru as a first step in the adoption (the re-adoption, he would have called it, given the Inca antecedents) of socialism. But Mariátegui was a product of his time: he could admire the Russian Revolution as the dawn of history. Such radical idolatry is not available to Marcos and his generation, who have witnessed the final failure of the god that failed. Marcos, too, is a product of his time; and the socialist Marcos probably expired, rather belatedly, on January 1, 1994, three years after the Soviet Union. A day later the other Marcos was born, the indigenist Marcos, the media Marcos, the Marcos we know.

The collapse of real socialism could not be denied by Marcos, his training in revolutionary Marxism notwithstanding. And so this expert in revealing the hidden and in hiding the obvious settled on another utopia, on a different salvation: "The essence of our struggle is the demand for the rights and culture of indigenous peoples, because that is who we are. Here we remain, standing firm, defiant. It is with an awareness of this that recognition of difference must come." The accomplishment of Marcos, you might say, is to have transformed identity politics into a revolutionary program.

So what does his assertion, made in the name of Reality, mean concretely, in reality? It expresses an admirable moral standpoint, but in practice it means something confused and contradictory. "We don't need anyone to give us anything," Marcos has said, disdaining "hand-out politics," which yields only "one more store, one more clinic." The old criticisms of "reformism," of "economicism," of those who "sell their soul and dignity for a few coins," resound in pronouncements that tend toward the spiritual and the messianic, and away from anything practical and possible. This suspicion of politics is the consequence not only of Marcos's radicalism, but also of his indigenism. He wants his people to be saved but to stay the same, to experience a transformation without being transformed. It is no coincidence that Marcos has nothing to say about the Indians who have chosen not to stay the same, who do not accept his radical politics.

The late Alberto Flores Galindo, a brilliant writer of the Peruvian left, warned against visions that fail to seek effective economic and social progress—the kind of progress that involves investments, schools, stores, clinics—and thereby assume the permanence of archaic ways of life that are supposedly superior but actually oppressive. "Only those who have never been at risk of contracting typhus," he wisely observed, "lament the arrival of a highway or the establishment of a medical center in a town." Of course Marcos has known human suffering—he has been surrounded by it in the jungle for almost twenty years; but his rejection of restitution that he considers unworthy ("we want things to change, we don't want charity") makes it difficult to bring his struggle to a satisfactory conclusion. After all, who decides when an act of reparation—the sort of justice that all Mexico desires—is genuine or sufficient? Have all the Indians of Chiapas been freely consulted? Or is the oracle in the mask all we need to know?

WHICH BRINGS US to the heart of the matter: the question of democracy. Beginning with their first communiqués, Marcos and the Zapatistas have constantly reiterated their adherence to democracy. Almost all their statements end with the phrase "democracy, justice, liberty." But aside from their constant blocking of the electoral processes in the corrupt local elections of 1995 and 1997, their adherence is abstract. From their point of view, democracy means that the nation should constitutionally recognize the right of the indigenous communities to be different; and up to this point their reasoning is impeccably democratic, since it prescribes the basic respect that majorities (mainly mestizo) owe minorities—in this case, the respect that the non-indigenous

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majority in Mexico owes the indigenous minority in Mexico. But what happens when some essential aspects of the cherished "practices and traditions" of communities infringe on those of their resident minorities, such as women, and Indians of other ethnic origins, and those of different religious faiths?

Questioned about this matter by Monsiváis, Marcos replied that "some practices and traditions do indigenous communities no good: prostitution, alcoholism, the exclusion of women and young people from collective decision-making processes—processes that are actually more collective than in urban areas but also discriminatory. Alcoholism, prostitution, machismo, and domestic violence must all be eliminated." He insists that these changes should not be forcibly imposed; but this rhetoric of revolutionary puritanism has a terrible pedigree.

By acknowledging the need for these changes, moreover, Marcos has shifted ground. Suddenly he is speaking not from Reality, but from reality. And the reality that he is prescribing poses a great challenge to the habits of democracy. If the Mexican majority must concede to the indigenous minority their right to difference, then the indigenous majority in any region or community must concede the same rights to their own internal minorities: the inalienable individual rights of freedom of religion, expression, movement, and residence. Yet this is not how things work now in Indian communities. It is often the case in Indian communities that those of differing faiths or opinions are excluded, ostracized, and even killed.

MARCOS AND HIS movement have been enormously helpful to Mexico in helping to accelerate political and democratic reform. Without their historical service as a catalyst, the old dinosaur—the PRI-controlled political system—might still be alive. Another indisputably positive effect of the movement's actions has been the raising of consciousness on the indigenous question. So now what? Surely the time has come for the building of a bridge between La Realidad and reality. But that bridge is democracy, not redemption.

After the Zapatista "long march" that arrived in Mexico City in March, and after its indigenous spokespeople enjoyed a carnival of media coverage and spoke freely in Congress, Marcos himself declared in an interview with Gabriel García Márquez that armed resistance was no longer an option. He was right: the march was his moment of glory, but it also demystified his image and his movement, and made him ordinary. And public opinion has noted and approved President Fox's change in policy from that of his predecessors. Behaving like a true fox, Fox unilaterally withdrew the army from its posts in the area of conflict. And even if the legislation on autonomous indigenous rights that Congress recently approved was rejected by the Zapatistas (who demand nothing less than sovereignty over their land, even if it would throw the whole entity known as Mexico into crisis), at this moment amendments and reforms to that law are being carefully discussed in each state of the country, since in each state the problem is different. (And in many states the problem is nonexistent.)

Marcos is now free to attempt a transformation even more exciting than the one he underwent a few years ago, from conventional guerrilla to Internet guerrilla: he could become a political leader of the Mexican left, which is sorely in need of leaders. In that role, he could press for an economic policy that addresses the needs of the poor, and especially the poorest of the poor, the Indians of Mexico. But this may be the most utopian scenario of all, alas. For the Zapatistas, certainly, the alternative is grim: the public is tiring of them, and the passage of time will only feed their hunger for martyrdom. For Marcos, any ending, even the most romantic—his disappearance into anonymity, his passage into legend—would be better than the fate of other leaders of Mexican and Latin American history, who died violently at the hands of the enemy (Túpac Amaru, Che Guevara) or at the hands of their own comrades.

If democracy in Mexico continues its process of consolidation, as is likely, the Zapatistas will become increasingly isolated. Their American and European panegyrists see their movement as the dawn of a new age, but the opposite may be true: this might be the last act in the old and tattered script of revolution. Marcos is still popular among young Mexicans, but as a celebrity, not as a role model. After almost twenty years in the jungle, he may have lost his sense of time and still believe that today's university student is the same young radical that he, Marcos, was when he ventured into the jungle in 1983.

For all these reasons—political, philosophical, generational, cultural—Marcos should consider again leading the Zapatistas into civic life as a regional party or a powerful faction in the regrouping of the left. But if Marcos continues to cleave to Mariátegui's gospel of redemption and revolution, to the "sacred text" of Mexican history—the text that "we write and that writes us," according to Marcos—there may be new and unpleasant surprises. For a turbulent river of violence and sacrifice runs through the religion of revolution, and not even postmodernism can restrain it. ■

—translated by Natasha Wimmer

The Anti-Hero as Hero

By OMER BARTOV

The Fragility of Goodness: Why Bulgaria's Jews Survived the Holocaust by Tzvetan Todorov translated by Arthur Denner

(Princeton University Press, 197 pp., $26.95)

THE HOLOCAUST IS ultimately about the abandonment of an entire people to the murder machine of a powerful state. What facilitated the genocide of the Jews was a combination of circumstances that made escape and rescue increasingly difficult, and made the work of the perpetrators astonishingly easy. The killing occurred within the context of a total and savagely brutal war. The perpetrators could rely on a modern state apparatus and a rich supply of well-trained and willing individuals from the police, the army, and other German state agencies. The German population of the Reich exhibited a distinct lack of interest in the Nazi regime's genocidal policies, largely carried out east of the country's expanded borders. The German occupation authori-

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ties rarely faced concerted opposition—and often found willing collaboration—among the officials and the population of the countries from which Jews were deported to the death camps or in which large-scale killing of Jews took place. Finally, for most of the war Germany's enemies did not make the genocide of the Jews a major focus of their military, diplomatic, or propaganda efforts—indeed, they feared that doing so would enhance anti-Semitism among their own populations, or would be detrimental to their wartime and postwar policies.

If we wish to make a general statement about the moral dimensions of this historical event, in other words, we must conclude that it ranged between the radical evil of the planners and the executioners to the more commonplace variety of complicity and indifference, exhibited also by such obviously anti-Nazi institutions as the British Foreign Office and the State Department, which were loath to change their immigration policies, to let Jewish refugees into Palestine, or to act more directly and forcefully against Nazi genocide until late in the war. From what we know today about the ideological commitment and dedication to the task of such characters as Adolf Eichmann and the members of Reinhard Heydrich's Reich Main Security Office, we can no longer speak about them as representative of the "banality of evil," as Hannah Arendt suggested four decades ago. Conversely, on the basis of the massive historical research on the Holocaust that has been carried out in the intervening years, neither can we assert that the genocide of the Jews was a precisely planned and executed operation.

The intention to murder the entire Jewish population was finally articulated in late 1941, but the implementation of the genocide depended on myriad factors and circumstances. The very scale of the undertaking, the geographical scope, the complex political, diplomatic, cultural, and logistical issues involved, meant that any resistance, even of an ambivalent and inconsistent nature, might hamper the efficiency of the operation. It should be remembered that the killing of the Jews took place over a relatively short time, primarily between 1942 and 1944. By 1944, Germany was rapidly heading toward defeat, and everyone knew it. What is breathtaking about the Holocaust is the ability of Germany to have murdered so many people from so many countries with such stunning rapidity even as it was losing a horrendously destructive total war. But it is also true that any delay in the killing could have spelled the difference between death and survival, because the Nazis ran out of time just before they ran out of Jewish victims.

It is for this reason that on another moral scale—indeed, on the moral scale that is most urgent to those who try to extract lessons from the Holocaust—what really matters are the moments, however rare, in which a few shades of "goodness" were introduced into the general canvas of evil, opportunism, and indifference. These moments matter not because they made a significant difference in the general scheme of things: they did not. They matter because they illustrate that, all the contemporary (and subsequent) talk of inevitability notwithstanding, it was possible to make choices, and that the right choices made at the right time by the right people could make a difference for some of the victims. From these flickerings of goodness we are forced to conclude that, had they been more prevalent, they might have driven more of the darkness out of the historical canvas. They might have actually changed the picture.

But the lesson is not quite so simple or so edifying. For we also learn from such instances that the difference between virtue and vice is far less radical than we would like to believe. Sometimes the most effective kind of goodness—I mean the practical kind, the kind that can actually save lives and not merely alleviate the conscience of the protagonists—is carried out by those who have already compromised themselves with evil, those who are members of the very organization that set the ball rolling toward the abyss. Hence a strange and frustrating contradiction: that absolute goodness is often absolutely ineffective, while compromised, splintered, and ambiguous goodness, one that is touched and stained by evil, is the only kind that may set limits to mass murder. And while absolute evil is indeed defined by its consistent one-dimensionality, this more mundane sort of wickedness, the most prevalent sort, contains within it also seeds of goodness that may be stimulated and encouraged by the example of the few dwellers of these nether regions who have come to recognize their own moral potential. As the great cosmological myth of the Kabbalah has it, the shreds of light that remain from the original divine universe may be collected only from the spheres of evil in which they now reside.

TZVETAN TODOROV'S ARGUMENT is sustained by a collection of documents. The gist of the argument is contained in the last phrase of Todorov's introductory essay: "It seems that, once introduced into public life, evil easily perpetuates itself, whereas good is always difficult, rare, and fragile. And yet possible." But Todorov is also making an argument about the complicity of good in evil. This is an old philosophical question. Can goodness be measured merely by its nature, or should it be evaluated according to its effect? Once goodness becomes compromised, it can justify complicity in evil without appearing to be the thing that it has become, namely, an instrument of crime and murder; but absolute goodness may remain so totally divorced from reality, so immersed in its own purity, that it has no effect on the world, and exists only for its own self-justification. Is the true saint the individual who tears himself from the world and leads the life of a hermit, filled with contempt for the vulgarities of everyday existence yet claiming to better the world by his example of closer proximity to the divine? Or is true saint-hood dependent on walking first through the valley of sin and learning the actual ways of man before finally entering into God's light?

In the twentieth century, an age of few saints and countless demons, there were many who justified their complicity in evil systems by arguing that had they opted out, they would have been replaced by far worse people. And there were others who did indeed opt out, choosing what the Germans called "inner emigration"—or, as others might see it, these good people decided to keep a "low profile" and to go about their business showing neither enthusiasm for nor criticism of the evils perpetrated around them, leading a "life of the mind" in the midst of an insane and barbarous reality. What extraordinary power of will was needed to keep one's eyes shut and one's ears sealed, and what moral agility was demanded of those who claimed to be untouched by the evil whose realities were predicated on their silence? How could those who facilitated the murder of millions have argued with conviction that their refusal to collaborate would have made an unprecedented horror even worse? Where is the boundary between complicity and resistance, between self-righteousness and effective action?

These are the questions that Todorov raises by way of examining the unique case of Bulgaria during the Holocaust. His answers are necessarily incomplete and provisional; but his approach to the subject, and his choice of example, seem to indicate that he opts for the necessary incompleteness and tentative nature of goodness in the midst of evil, and that he prefers effective action out of mixed motives to absolute goodness that accomplishes nothing. Todorov does not believe in heroes, but he admires those who, whatever their errors and their sins, made a decision at a crucial moment that determined the fate of others. This is what he would like us to learn from the case of Bulgaria: that enough people decided at

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the right moment to resist evil, and that some of them, who were hardly admirable morally or ideologically, succeeded. In this sense, the agency of goodness counts more than its purity. As he says about the action of Dimitur Peshev, the man who takes center stage in his account: "What was exceptional about it? Not the fact that the man behind it obeyed the voice of conscience rather than his government's order nor that he was ready to accept the risks that came with insubordination. What made his action unique was the simple fact that it succeeded."

THE EXTRAORDINARY CASE of Bulgaria's actions during the Holocaust has been steadily gaining attention. It was mentioned in passing by Hannah Arendt in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in 1963, and it has since been analyzed by Frederick B. Chary in *The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution* in 1972, by Christo Boyadjieff in *Saving the Bulgarian Jews in World War II* in 1989, by Gabriele Nissim in *L'uomo che fermo Hitler (The Man Who Stopped Hitler)* in 1998—on which Todorov heavily relies—and by Michael Bar-Zohar in *Beyond Hitler's Grasp: The Heroic Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews* in 1998, the latter an important contribution that receives only scant mention by Todorov. Among scholars, and in Bulgaria and Israel, this is not exactly a new subject. But it is only recently that a wider public has been exposed to the debate over what accounted for the difference between the fate of Bulgaria's fifty thousand Jews, all of whom were saved from the Nazi death camps, and the fate of most of the other Jewish communities under German occupation or in countries allied with the Reich.

The rescue of Jews during the Holocaust depended on several crucial factors. The political circumstances of the territories, the relations between Jews and gentiles, the geographical location and character of the land: those were the paramount factors. All the cases of mass rescue—among which Bulgaria certainly stands out—had their paradoxes and their peculiarities. Indeed, a brief look at such cases demonstrates that no simple explanation applies to all. What in one place may have facilitated rescue may have led people to their doom in another place.

Consider the remarkable case of Denmark, where almost the entire Jewish population of more than seven thousand people was rescued by being ferried at the last moment to safety in neutral Sweden. This happy outcome was made possible not merely by the proximity of a safe territory to which the Jews could be taken, but also because Denmark retained a relatively independent status under German occupation thanks to its willingness to submit peacefully to the Reich. By contrast, consider the Netherlands: whereas the Dutch were the first publicly to demonstrate against anti-Jewish measures by the occupying Germans, seventy-five percent of Dutch Jewry (some 105,000 out of 140,000) were deported to their death. The extraordinary "success" of the extermination of the Jews in the Netherlands had to do with the convenient concentration of Jews in a few urban centers, the geography of a land that left little room for hiding, the efficiency and willing collaboration of the Dutch administration, and the obedience and orderly conduct of the Jews themselves.

Anti-Semitism did not play a major role in the Netherlands, which had a highly assimilated Jewish population. In France, where anti-Semitism had much deeper roots, two-thirds of the Jewish population survived, despite the fact that the collaborationist Vichy regime enacted anti-Jewish legislation shortly after the armistice with Germany and employed the French police in rounding up Jews. Here geography made it easier for Jews to seek shelter, and the French willingness to rid France of recently arrived foreign Jews was transformed into a growing resistance to the deportation of French Jews, especially when the initial popularity of Vichy rapidly declined and resentment of German exploitation of French labor was on the rise.

Fascist Italy, for its part, promulgated anti-Semitic laws as early as 1938, but the Italian authorities resisted German pressure to hand over Italian Jews or Jews living in areas under Italian occupation. In this case the relative weakness of anti-Semitism combined with the inefficiency of the bureaucracy and the general reluctance to allow brutalities against people who appeared to Italians as a civilized European minority. Against the Ethiopians Italy behaved with the customary colonial barbarism.

Italy was Germany's ally, of course, and hundreds of thousands of Italian soldiers died fighting for Duce and Führer on the Eastern Front. Poland, by contrast, was undoubtedly one of Hitler's greatest victims, and Poles resisted the Germans with great heroism and sacrifice. In Poland, however, resisting Nazism did not necessarily mean rescuing Jews. As we now know, Poles (not to mention Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians) often collaborated with the Germans in hunting down Jews and carried out widespread massacres on their own initiative.

Since it is difficult to generalize about rescue during the Holocaust, it is crucial to understand the specific circumstances of particular cases, so as to give due credit to those who resisted mass murder and to provide them with their rightful place in the annals of this horror, and so as to understand that there is always room for choice and action. However strong the temptation, and however persuasive the excuses, it is always possible to stand up against evil, if one is willing to pay the price.

In this regard the case of Bulgaria is especially instructive. Those who wish to know the fine details of this event should consult Bar-Zohar's study: in this splendid book they will discover a rich web of intrigues and romance, good and evil, much of it well documented, some of it apparently derived more from gossip and speculation. Bar-Zohar was born in Bulgaria and immigrated to Israel with his family (and most of the rest of Bulgarian Jewry) in 1948. There is a personal dimension to his tale, a natural and sympathetic understanding for the Jewish community of Bulgaria, whose intense love for the land and pride in their identity were preserved for another half-century in Israel. This dimension of the story is almost entirely lacking in Todorov's account. Todorov adds little to our knowledge of what actually happened, and the documents that he assembles are mostly cited elsewhere, though rarely in their entirety. But his book is not a work of history, it is an essay in the moral analysis of history.

THE STORY ITSELF can be told briefly. In the wake of World War I, Bulgaria was forced to hand over the regions of Dobrudja in the northeast to Romania, Thrace in the south to Greece, and Macedonia in the west to Yugoslavia. While it did not have a strong fascist movement or anti-Semitic tradition, and retained a sense of loyalty to Russia since the Russians liberated it from five hundred years of Ottoman rule in 1878, Bulgaria chose to ally itself with Nazi Germany in anticipation of a return of its "lost territories," and also out of fear of German occupation. Even before it joined the Axis in 1941, Bulgaria passed the "Law for the Defense of the Nation," a series of anti-Semitic regulations modeled on the Nuremberg Laws.

By then the country was ruled by a pro-German coalition headed by Bogdan Filov, the prime minister, a distinguished scholar and a notorious anti-Semite, and Peter Gabrovski, the minister of the interior, who was similarly known for his anti-Jewish sentiments. The government established a Commissariat on Jewish Affairs, whose chief, Alexander Belev, was a vehemently anti-Semitic member of the fascist Ratnik (literally "fighter") organization, one of several Bulgarian nationalist and extreme right groups that included

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also the militaristic legionnaires led by old generals, and the youth fascist movement Brannik ("defender"). By agreement between Belev and Eichmann's representative, the infamous Theodor Dannecker (who had just arrived in Sofia after organizing the deportations of French Jews to Auschwitz), the Jews of Macedonia and Thrace were deported to Auschwitz and Treblinka in March 1943. Of 11,343 people, only twelve are said to have survived. (These days, as we read about ethnic troubles in Macedonia, we tend to forget that there used to be a Jewish population there, people who had lived there for many centuries and were entirely destroyed in a few days.)

Unlike Dobrudja, which was directly annexed by Bulgaria, Thrace and Macedonia were hypothetically territories of the German Reich that were merely administered and temporarily occupied by Bulgaria. While the population was offered Bulgarian citizenship, this offer was not extended to the Jews. Hence it could be argued that the Bulgarian authorities, including King Boris III, who was the final arbiter in all questions of policy, had no choice in the matter of these deportations. Yet it was the Bulgarian police and army that conducted the deportations, actions that were accompanied by numerous brutalities: rapes, lootings, violent humiliations, deprivation of food and water, and everything else that one associates with similar operations throughout Europe. Most Bulgarians may not have hated Jews, but when policemen and soldiers were sent to implement barbarous policies, they rarely showed much humanity.

The Belev-Dannecker agreement stipulated that a total of twenty thousand Jews would initially be deported. This indicated that a further eight thousand Jews were to be deported from within the old Bulgarian territory. It was at this point that influential Bulgarians began a series of moves intended to block the deportation of the nation's Jewish citizens to Poland. Here the most important (and effective) individual was Dimitur Peshev, who was vice-chairman of the National Assembly. Urged on by a delegation of citizens from the nearby town of Kyustendil, Peshev succeeded in persuading Interior Minister Gabrovski to cancel the imminent deportation at what was literally the last moment. So as to prevent any further attempts to deport the Jews, moreover, Peshev wrote a letter of protest against deportations to Prime Minister Filov that was signed by forty-two deputies from the ruling coalition. This finally exposed the policy of the government and demonstrated that it lacked support even from within its own ranks.

Accompanied by mass protests from the population and a variety of professional associations, as well as strong and consistent pressure by the leaders of the Orthodox Church, Peshev's action seems to have determined the king's decision not to bend to German demands to proceed with the deportations. While about half of the Jewish population was uprooted from Sofia and sent to rural parts of Bulgaria, often to live under harsh conditions, no one was deported to Poland. This, with the exception of Denmark and Finland (where the numbers were very small), was the only case in which a country allied with Germany or occupied by it saved the entirety of its Jewish population.

THE FACT OF the rescue of Bulgarian Jewry is hardly open to doubt, but the question of who was responsible for it, who were the heroes and who were the villains, is more difficult. As Laura Secor has recently shown in *Lingua Franca*, at different times different parties have claimed credit for this outcome. Todor Zhikov's Stalinist regime asserted that the Communists, and indeed Zhikov himself, were behind the rescue. Zhikov obviously had little to do with saving the Jews; but it is true that the Communists were strongly opposed to the government's anti-Semitic policies, even if their opposition was hardly effective. Supporters of Boris III have claimed that the king deserves the glory for his ability to maneuver the Nazis and to delay the deportations until it was too late. Others point to the resistance of the good, simple, and unprejudiced Bulgarian people as a whole. Most recently, reflecting a lamentable aspect of local anti-Communist sentiments in the wake of the fall of the Soviet-installed regime, the Bulgarian Supreme Court rehabilitated Bogdan Filov and Peter Gabrovski, the two men directly responsible for the deportations of the Jews.

An important example of this competition of memories was provided by the debate that was unleashed by the publication of Bar-Zohar's book. Toward the end of his book, Bar-Zohar makes the following observation:

> On October 21, 1996, the Jewish National Fund inaugurated a forest in the name of Bulgaria. In this forest, memorial plaques were dedicated to Dimiter Peshev, to the heads of the Bulgarian church, and to King Boris and Queen Giovanna, for having rescued the Jews of Bulgaria from the Holocaust. Another plaque was dedicated to the memory of the 11,343 Thracian and Macedonian Jews who were massacred in the death camps.

This revelation caused an uproar among the survivors of Macedonian Jewry, who claimed that King Boris should not be honored: his crucial role in preventing the deportation of Bulgaria's Jews notwithstanding, he was also responsible for the deportation of the Thracian and Macedonian Jews to their deaths, as well as for passing anti-Semitic legislation as early as 1941. But the community of Bulgarian Jews in Israel insisted on honoring the king, whom it considered its primary savior. The debate led the Jewish National Fund to appoint a committee headed by the retired Supreme Court justice Moshe Bejski, which submitted its recommendations in July 2000. It concluded that the plaques commemorating the king and the queen should be removed, and a new plaque be put up commemorating the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia as well as honoring those Bulgarians who struggled to rescue the Jews (apparently without naming names).

Todorov chooses Peshev as the hero of his tale, not least because Peshev is anything but a natural hero: he was complicit with a regime that passed anti-Semitic legislation (for which he voted) and supported collaboration with the Germans. He was a tragic figure who paid a price of political obscurity and isolation during the many years that passed between his courageous emergence into history and his death in 1973. But Peshev is the symbol of what Todorov calls "the fragility of goodness." A few more hours of hesitation, a slightly weaker will, a perfectly human fear of humiliation and abuse—and the deportations would have begun. Todorov claims that "in Europe of 1943, under Nazi control," Peshev "was probably the only statesman to have been able to stand up to infamy and stop the persecution of the Jews. After him, no one can say, 'I didn't know, it wasn't my place, I couldn't have'...." This is somewhat exaggerated; there were protests elsewhere.

BUT WHAT DO we actually learn from the case of Bulgaria, apart from the hope that "history" will find the right man or woman to act at the right moment as we all hope that we, too, would act? As we know, "history" rarely produces such figures. More likely than not, it is on the side of the murderers.

As Peshev explains in his memoirs, which are cited in Todorov's book, the so-called Law for the Defense of the Nation had provoked a major debate in Bulgarian society. While Peshev fails to mention directly that he voted in support of the law, he does write that

> the split within the [parliamentary] majority on this question did not become public and was never a source of open

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conflict, because the adversaries agreed that the pressing political issues of the day took precedence; in the interest of overall national policy and the needs of the state itself, the dissenters resigned themselves to the sacrifice required of them. This sacrifice was made more palatable by the knowledge that the restrictions on the Jews, however painful, were nonetheless temporary and would not be taken to extremes.

Thus the "sacrifice" by the dissenters who ended up supporting the law was made in the name of Bulgarian national interests.

Surely the true sacrifice was made by those who had no representation in the assembly, namely the Jews. And the national interest involved had to do with Bulgaria's urge to win back its "lost territories," that is, to expand its borders at the price of other nations through collaboration with Nazi Germany rather than face the threat of German occupation. This kind of *Realpolitik* proved to be folly, as so often happens when one plays games with the devil. Nazi Germany lost the war, Bulgaria lost its "lost territories" once more, and then it fell victim to Stalinist rule for many decades.

As for the expectations that the anti-Semitic legislation not be strictly enforced, they were not met by the regime. Those who supported the legislation, like Peshev, in the view that its application would be limited were wrong. Hence Peshev's crucial intervention in 1943 was in large part in reaction to the consequences of a policy that he and his colleagues had put into place in 1940–1941. If Peshev's action was indeed effective because he belonged to the ruling elite, his action was also made necessary by his own role in creating the situation that called for such radical steps in the first place.

No less indicative of the ambiguities of the period is the manner in which Peshev, as well as many other Bulgarian opponents of the anti-Semitic policies of their nation, spoke about the Jewish community. Just as King Boris had stressed in his discussions of the issue with the Nazi leadership, these men argued that Bulgarian Jews differ substantially from other Eastern European Jews. "Their" Jews were primarily Sephardim, that is, descendants of Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492 and came to the Balkans. Moreover, they were mostly simple workers, small artisans and traders, and very few of them were involved in banking or big business, while virtually none of them occupied positions of political power and influence. They were culturally deeply assimilated, and utterly lacking in religious fanaticism.

All these descriptions of Bulgarian Jewry are true, but they are at the same time rather troubling. Such apologies imply that had Bulgarian Jews kept more to their traditions, or had they been economically more successful, or had they entered the political elite, there might have been better reason to persecute them. This defense of the Jews is intellectually complicit with the attack on them. It also evokes another question that Todorov never raises: why did almost the entire Jewish population of Bulgaria, so patriotic and so grateful to its gentile rescuers, leave Bulgaria shortly after the war and immigrate en masse to Palestine?

Many of the figures cited by Todorov also stress Bulgaria's own record as a nation that had been occupied by a foreign power for many centuries, a nation in which different ethnic groups and denominations lived side by side in relative harmony. They note that small nations such as Bulgaria cannot afford to be intolerant of their minorities, but must stand out as beacons of inclusion and open-mindedness. This indeed seems to be a major factor in explaining the willingness of some nations, or ethnic and religious groups, to help others subjected to persecution. The Huguenots in France, who had long memories of persecution by the Catholics, were notable in their willingness to help and to shelter Jews during the German occupation, as the case of the village of Le Chambon eloquently illustrates. From this perspective, the memory of occupation, persecution, and humiliation may serve to stimulate moral outrage and courage in the face of evil (though unfortunately it may also create a tendency to close in upon oneself and refuse to admit anyone else's victimhood).

IN 1994, TODOROV published a book called *A French Tragedy*. It was an account of the takeover of a small French town by the Resistance on the day in which the Allies landed in Normandy, hundreds of miles to the west. The consequences of this action were tragic: the Resistance was driven out and many innocent people who might otherwise have remained alive were killed, including a group of Jews who were hidden in the village. This was a moral tale, in which Todorov wished to illustrate his rejection of thoughtless and suicidal heroism, of good deeds based more on gesture than on reason. In *Facing the Extreme*, which appeared in 1991, Todorov had much the same to say about the heroic but (to his mind) utterly disastrous and stupid Polish uprising in Warsaw in 1944, which ended with the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Poles by the Nazis as the Red Army stood by and watched from the eastern bank of the Vistula River.

Todorov's new book is another moral tale, told by a moral philosopher raised in Communist Bulgaria and educated in France. (The personal intensity in this book is unmistakable.) I am generally in agreement with his cautionary statements to historians; and with his insistence on chance and ambiguity, on coincidence and the possibility that everything might have turned out entirely differently. But I am less certain about the application of his moral philosophy to real life, to everyday existence, especially in extreme situations. For this knowledge that any action may

Butterflies

Inevitably alchemy, the lesser into the greater,
morphing to the pupa stage, the chrysalis,
but faster, the cuticle of skin sloughed off,
regrown, and shed again, each larval, instar
meta phase passing through more molting lives
than saints—five, six times before the final birth,
then into the light, like eyes waded up, then slowly,
with the blood, wings opening. Opening and closing.
For those that fly like birds, at least four inches
tip to wingtip, continent to continent, Emperors,
Monarchs, Giant Swallowtails, large enough to feed
like leaves along the branches or be the blown leaf
drinking from the dung pool hoofprint in the mud—
size the compensation and camouflage for color.
For those that fly the garden, in graduated light,
like those that live inside us, smaller, different
distances, in colors just arrived at by pigment
or reflection, tiny scales of forewings and hindwings
overlapping, colors the secret shadings of the sun—
dawn yellows, blood oranges, fritillary reds, gentian
blues, each slighter than a whistle blade, like
hummingbirds seen through, Flame Coppers, Streak
Indigos, White Bruise, intensity at once-in-a-
lifetime brightness, Brightness at the flower
finding food, inside the maul and marl of the mouth—

Stanley Plumly

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turn out differently—this sense of the fragility of goodness, of the instability of values, of the potential that good intentions and well-meant actions will hurt people and even kill people—can also become the reason for compromise, accommodation, and passivity.

In the real world, this view can be abused by those who, like most of us, would choose to do nothing in the face of evil. After all, most of us are cowards; we have our own lives and those of our families to protect, and they count for more in our eyes than the lives of others. The morality that Todorov admires, and that did indeed issue in an admirable outcome in Bulgaria, is a problematic view of morality in times of crisis. Applied to all of Nazi-occupied Europe, it might well have ensured that Europe remained under Nazi occupation. Against fiends who believe in the power of the will, such a belief in ambiguity, such a reluctance to take the side of an absolute, would have left goodness very fragile indeed.

In a recent and beautiful Czech film called *Divided We Fall*, a childless Czech couple give shelter to a Jewish boy who has escaped from the camps in Poland. They are not a heroic couple. They shelter the boy because they wish to protect him, but also because they fear that if he leaves them he will be caught and reveal who had hid him. In order to protect him, they collaborate with the Germans, and are therefore regarded as traitors by the rest of the community, which for its part had refused to shelter the boy. To prevent searches in their home, the couple decides that the woman must become pregnant; and since her husband is sterile, she sleeps with the Jewish boy. The Russians arrive just as the woman is about to give birth to a baby, and they prepare to execute the husband for collaboration—but he is saved at the last moment by the appearance of the Jew, who has now become not only the father of his wife's child but also his guardian angel.

Those are the ambiguities and the compromises of goodness, and in many ways they are well reflected in Todorov's moral tale of Bulgarian Jewry. Yet the moment of action, the moment in which one decides to stand up against evil, not knowing what the price will be and fully aware of the fact that everything may go wrong—this moment cannot finally be derived from the deep pessimism that is at the bottom of Todorov's argument about the conditions of goodness. Surely it requires instead a naïve, almost blind optimism. Without such a faith in the *non*-fragility of goodness, heroism will never appear; and goodness will remain confined within a sad, retrospective rumination on the vicissitudes of human action and the limits of morality. ■

Voices Carry

By DAVID THOMSON

Fast-Talking Dames by Maria DiBattista

(Yale University Press, 365 pp., $27.95)

THE MEN AND women in American colleges these days sometimes reckon that the movies began with *Jaws* and *Star Wars*, and then congratulate themselves on a sufficient sense of history to accommodate films made before they were born. A few weeks ago, on an Ivy League campus, I was told by a film professor that students shown *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without a Cause* had felt that James Dean was whiny. Well, such a case can be made: Dean was never short on self-pity, and that gloomy mood was over-indulged by the Actors Studio confusion with words. Yet these students went further: they identified with the parents.

This campus wasn't Princeton, I hasten to add, which is where Maria DiBattista teaches. I can imagine her best students having a blast in her courses, though I wouldn't mind the occasional skeptical question in a book that sometimes reads like ecstatic lecture transcripts. But Ms. DiBattista (which isn't a cool way of addressing a "dame") has justice as well as enthusiasm on her side in judging that the greatest of Hollywood movies now seem to be the grown-up comedies, from romantic to screwball—the ones, she would say, that celebrate "fast-talking dames" and were made nearly sixty years ago.

The greatest movies, but maybe not the most enduring: just because your video store stocks *The Awful Truth*, *Bringing Up Baby*, and *The Lady Eve* doesn't guarantee that they are seen or taken in. To look at today's films, to have to listen to their dialogue, leaves the matter of influence in awful doubt. On the other hand, kids collapse in mirth over the sight gags in *There's Something About Mary* and *American Pie*, and they repeat lines from *Austin Powers* so often that you want to pass laws restoring silence (or at least silents) to the cinema. So I have to wonder whether the best of our best—our comedies of sentiment, language, and identity as well as romance—are most honored on our lofty campuses, along with *The Faerie Queene* and *Tristram Shandy*.

MORE OF THIS anxiety anon. I want first to recommend DiBattista's book, which is the best on its subject since Stanley Cavell's *Pursuits of Happiness* (1981) and Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape* (1974). Unlike those two books, DiBattista's has no subtitle. You know that it is a movie book by its jacket and the illustrations. But it is fair to the book (as well as a warning of its limitations) to say that the author is celebrating ideal figures and their talk without being confined to the screen. We are dealing with a plausible application to all of life. Thus DiBattista asserts in her preface that "even as a teenager I knew that I never wanted to appear that bereft [as bereft as Marilyn Monroe] of words and self-confidence, even if it meant that I could never hope to attract, much less entrance, some man."

Then, in her closing, DiBattista reminds her readers of Henry James's advice to young women graduating from Bryn Mawr in 1905:

> There is no immediate nor even real danger, as James feared, of American women simply handing over their most precious property, but they may be lulled into letting it fall into disuse or disrepair. All the more reason to attend to the vigilant women I celebrate in this book. They had a real feeling for the position, and respect for the value of the American language. Their fast talk was their dowry but also their legacy, one that we should take care not give or fritter away [*sic*]. These women were of their time but ahead of it, too. If we are lucky, we can still catch up with them.

It is a large and generous hope, and one that makes us feel more deprived nowadays, after nearly fifty years of

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movies lacking eloquent or even articulate women (no matter that our respect for women has improved in the meantime).

DiBattista's airy pleasure comes from the enclosed contentment of literary studies in academia: that Milton and *Middlemarch* are alike in addressing our present moral preoccupations (as opposed to their own). And so the bravest and the most admirable thing about DiBattista's book is her standing up to sing the praises of heroines who are both the characters in her favorite movies and the actresses who played them. She is most fluent as a writer in her extended essays, or arias, on the stars: Jean Harlow, Carole Lombard, Ginger Rogers, Myrna Loy, Jean Arthur, and Claudette Colbert. Her voice is less assured, more academic and speculative, more driven to fanciful extremes, in her raptures on *Bringing Up Baby*, *The Awful Truth*, *Ninotchka*, *His Girl Friday*, and *The Lady Eve* (where her star-gazing admiration falls on Katharine Hepburn, Irene Dunne, Greta Garbo or Garbo's laugh, Rosalind Russell, and Barbara Stanwyck). There are vivid insights along the way, and often the writing is excellent: this is an academic book in which you feel the author's desire to be worthy of her own heroines.

Most of the time DiBattista proves this worth by saying things that will educate students, and would likely have entertained the film-makers whom she admires. Of Carole Lombard's Irene in *My Man Godfrey*, she says that "her fast talk is the fast talk of a child who breathlessly wants to get her words out before she is cut off." Of the hat that Garbo surveys and then wears in *Ninotchka*, she remarks that "its base is softly conical but its apex is a comic hybrid between a dunce cap and a smokestack. I hazard to describe it as a hat with disappointed or curtailed phallic aspirations, ending as it does as a jagged rather than majestic peak." And here she is, keeping pace with some of the best dialogue of the era, describing a moment from *After the Thin Man*: "When [Nora's] cousin Selma Landis (Elissa Landi) asks permission to reward Nicky with a kiss, Nora consents, even while issuing a warning: 'Go right ahead, but I warn you, it's a hard habit to get out of.' Sexual affection has seldom received so droll a tribute. Nora's compliments are as addictive as Nicky's kisses."

It is difficult to be certain about such things, but I think that simple yet elegant line was written by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett (working, it is said, from a Dashiell Hammett story) on a project directed by W. S. Van Dyke II. I cite those names because DiBattista never mentions them, which is odd in view of her sturdy respect for women (and, one assumes, men) with a voice. Creators also deserve to be named. It is a part of DiBattista's approach that she prefers to regard the works as finished gems that have little context or history. But wary film scholars need to keep tighter grasp of the circumstances in which movies were fashioned. Milton and George Eliot may have known that they were making art, but none of the film-makers whom this book treasures ever possessed such confidence. In the 1930s especially, they hoped that they were cooking up entertainment, but they knew that whatever played best would be the finished product.

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Irene Dunne in "Theodora Goes Wild," 1936

DiBattista does make a stab at historical context. She has the feeling that, more or less with the coming of sound, a revolution hit American speech. She quotes Edmund Wilson lamenting in 1926 "the slowness of American speech. The truth is that Americans still drawl in the city as well as in the country: not even New York, unlike Paris or London, has a language of the quick intelligence." But then she rejoices at the way slang, a jazzy vernacular, and hip new verbal inventions sprang up, and she jumps on Virginia Woolf's excitement at Americans making "the language adapt itself to their needs":

> In England, save for the impetus given by the war, the word-coining power has lapsed; our writers vary the metres of their poetry, remodel the rhythms of prose, but one may search English fiction in vain for a single new word. It is significant that when we want to freshen our speech we borrow from America—poppycock, rambunctious, flip-flop, booster, good-mixer—all the expressive ugly vigorous slang which creeps into use among us first in talk, later in writing, comes from across the Atlantic.

I'm not sure how subject to proof that is, let alone how much it affected the status of women; but it is the most provocative part of DiBattista's book, and so important as to supersede the virtues of the given films and actresses, just as it may help to explain our present tongue-tied films. It begins to tell us something significant about the Hollywood that made the pictures that DiBattista likes—but to which she seems deaf.

Can there be only three, four, or five years between, say, *The Wind* (1928), *Sunrise* (1927), and *The Crowd* (1928) and *Trouble in Paradise* (1932), *Scarface* (1932), *City Streets* (1931), and *Morocco* (1930)? After all, nine years is all that separates *Lethal Weapon* and *Lethal Weapon 4*. I do not mean to scold silent pictures for being silent. That exigency drove them, often, into demented flights of "beauty," just as it provoked unnatural goodness and evil in many of its characters. But with the coming of sound an astonishing release of naturalism rushed in, as if to liberate a medium that had been under siege for so long.

It may be a matter of taste (or prejudice), but the straining visual poetry of silent cinema was abruptly jettisoned in

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favor of a smart, efficient, and prosaic way of photographing conversation. You can see it in Lubitsch, Capra, Hawks, and many others, and it is a style that doesn't date. I happen to prefer it to the expressionism of *Sunrise* and *The Crowd*, but that preference hardly matters beside the greedy, comprehensive way in which talk became the new engine of films. Snarls and wisecracking ushered in a mass of new players (Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, Cary Grant, Bogart, the famously laconic Gary Cooper—you can't be laconic in silent films!—as well as the women). Some of those guys talked as fast as the dames. But they were all dependent on the microphone and the writers and the directors (from Broadway, magazines, newspapers, and even literature) who could handle dialogue.

CONSIDER ALSO THAT color as a complete system arrived in film in 1935, but it did not become the dominant form until the late 1950s, and even now a determined director can insist on black-and-white for *Raging Bull* or *Schindler's List*. But sound, by contrast, was universal within a couple of years of Jolson's first utterances—save Chaplin's work, and he could hold his own because he was secure and separate in the business. (When he did talk, and lecture, in *The Great Dictator*, there were many who wished he had shut up for longer.)

DiBattista does not ask herself why sound was so eagerly adopted, or what its impact was. This is a pity, because sound was what lifted her blooming dames from their soil. Surely it is worth noting how talkies broadly coincided with the wide use of radio and records. In about a decade, voices were everywhere, a novel forest of intimacy surrounding the listener. All of a sudden, fame was borne on the voice. Radio was not just sports, the comics, the news, and drama; it was the advertisements, too, and their unique rapidity, fearful of being turned off. The new rage for voices lapped over into the craze for songs (and the songwriting that we now regard as the fruit of a golden age). All this is the essential running soundtrack behind talk in movies, and its density includes the new demotic of Hemingway and the jazzy wordplay of Dos Passos, along with a montage of voices that includes Will Rogers, Bing Crosby, Louis Armstrong, Walter Winchell, Jack Benny, Amos 'n' Andy, Roosevelt, Hitler, Orson Welles, and Father Coughlin.

Fast-Talking Dames never hears that surround-sound, but hammers its own title without mercy. The more I heard that stress, without explanation, the uneasier I became. Take "fast," for instance. DiBattista is wild about speed, and sometimes she seems to be writing too fast to think clearly. Quick thinking is surely a sign of life and spirit, especially when you are doing ten rounds with Cary Grant in *His Girl Friday*. But speed for speed's sake can be monotonous and grating. All the great ladies whom DiBattista cherishes varied their pacing: Stanwyck, Lombard, Hepburn, Dunne. There is nothing like an apt hesitation, once you're up to speed. There is nothing like a pause to reveal the other person's loss of words and arguments.

SO IT IS masochistic for DiBattista to exclude Mae West: "She may be the mistress of double entendre (as of all else), but she is decidedly slow, even lethargic, in speed and movement." That is dotty; but it is a modest omission compared with the reluctance to delight in the stealthy bearing and voice of Dietrich in her films for Josef von Sternberg. Dietrich never attempted to be the modern American woman, to be sure, but their seven films (from *The Blue Angel* to *The Devil Is a Woman*) are models of sultry talk and a new appreciation of how words and pregnant hesitation can signal a woman's authority.

Von Sternberg would be written off as an arrogant eccentric (a fate in which he exulted), and Dietrich was never the same without him. Their films were not big at the box office, but they were so daring as to be very influential in Hollywood. I would add that someone named Jules Furthman wrote several of them—*Morocco*, *Shanghai Express*, and *Blonde Venus*—the same Furthman who would help to write *To Have and Have Not* and *The Big Sleep* a decade later. And if DiBattista cannot hear the same languid yet incisive feminine rhythm going from *Morocco* to *To Have and Have Not*, and if she misses Bacall's little lesson to Bogart ("You do know how to whistle, don't you, Steve?"), or how in *The Big Sleep* they join in the exhilarating, love-making Marxian phone call to the police, then she has an ear unworthy of her ideal about dames. And if she or anyone retorts that those two Hawks films from 1944–1946 are not comedies—on a par with Hawks's *Bringing Up Baby*, *His Girl Friday*, and *Ball of Fire*—then I would demand to know why their audiences laugh so much.

DiBattista is altogether too casual about authorship. Excluding Mae West from her club is peculiarly misguided in that West has an asset that the team needs. Stanwyck, Dunne, Lombard, and so on were enchanting players, but they were hired to fill their parts, and they spoke the lines given to them. Mae West, by contrast, wrote a great deal of what she said. She had something like control in her pictures. That was one reason (and not the only one) why she could order the guys around.

NO MATTER THAT she serves on the women's studies faculty at Princeton, DiBattista takes pains to distance herself from "the feminist critique of film as a tool of ideological oppression and the camera as a[n] instrument of the 'male gaze,' catering to voyeurism and fetishists." I am grateful to her for this freedom from dogma, but still this book does glorify the American girl of the 1930s and early 1940s, and it takes an authentic, sisterly pleasure in the sight and the sound of the great "dames" already noted—and don't forget Ginger Rogers and Jean Harlow, both of whom are very well treated here. And it does so in a rhapsodic tone, and with a lack of discussion of how these films were made, or of the society that produced them, that makes it dangerously easy to regard these actresses as life forces who simply willed their great movies into being—and for DiBattista's gaze. Time and again, as she retrieves a moment from a film and makes it radiant, she forgets to reveal who wrote it, or even who directed it. The overall assumption of the book is to ignore many men's names even as it appreciates their gaze.

There are a few intriguing exceptions, well worth further research. (A certain Viña Delmar wrote *The Awful Truth*, and little is known about her beyond the rare wit and generosity of that film.) Still, for the most part men ordained, directed, wrote, and made these pictures. You might answer, Well, of course they did: men did nearly everything on films in those days, so how could it not be so? But what also needs to be stressed is that Hollywood was in those days a very male and very macho club, in which the exploitation of women was taken for granted. To pick only one example: in discussing *Bringing Up Baby* (and her exploration of this film is a tour de force, even if the tower wavers in its own loftiness), DiBattista asks us to recollect that the Howard Hawks who indulged in the occasional overhead view of the structure of a scene was actually educated as an engineer. Fair enough: Hawks was a mechanical engineering major at Cornell, though Todd McCarthy's thorough biography makes it clear that drinking, gambling, girls, and racing cars were his chief preoccupations there. But if—let us welcome the chance—the realities of Hollywood are to intrude on *Bringing Up Baby*, why not add to the engineer's eye the widespread contemporary estimate

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that Howard Hawks was one of his community's most dedicated womanizers? I have felt for decades that Hawks's treatment of women, while filled with admiration, appreciation, and humor, is that of someone who would happily have died trying to fuck them all.

Not that I see any need to be censorious about that. Hawks was uncommonly detached (or selfish), and one of his wives—Nancy Hawks, known as "Slim"—has said that beneath the cool Anglo dandy exterior there beat the heart of a gambler, a steady liar, and a fantasist. She had reason to know. She helped to discover Lauren Bacall ("Slim" in *To Have and Have Not*), and then she had the rueful pleasure of seeing Howard's customary "gaze" interrupted by Bacall's falling for Bogart. But there was ironic justice in that turn of events, because Hawks always did interruption superbly well, and the master being usurped is a very Hawksian story. (Von Sternberg filmed it several times, starting with *Morocco*.)

I URGE DIBATTISTA to view these exceptional films as springing from their moment and their network. Hollywood in the age of Hawks (it is inescapable now that he was the most adventurous director of the time) was in flux, doing all it could to move up in terms of class. For talkies coincided with, and helped to propel, the urge of many in Hollywood (second-generation Jews, Ivy League types like Hawks, as well as the Eastern intellectuals employed and enriched by sound) to detach themselves from the raw, immigrant showbiz character most linked to silent pictures, to justify their rare booty, and to be as smart as good theater and new novels.

Sound lost a significant part of the audience—the part whose English was not good enough to keep up with talkative plots. But a kind of social climbing pushed that acceleration, just as it rejoiced in the chance to mingle with café society, literary names, and the upper-class WASP establishment. The most striking instance of that was the friendship between David Selznick and Jock Whitney that led to the partnership that made *Gone With the Wind*. But there were other ties, too, and a lot of marriages and socializing across class limits.

It was no accident that so many English or English-sounding actors and actresses thrived in this climate. There was a socially driven reverence for correct speech, and talking in sentences in the movies helped such English natives (or children of empire) as Cary Grant, Boris Karloff, Clive Brook, Norma Shearer, Leslie Howard, Charles Laughton, Robert Donat, Greer Garson, Claude Rains, Basil Rathbone, Walter Pidgeon, Herbert Marshall, David Niven, Merle Oberon, Errol Flynn, Laurence Olivier, George Sanders, Olivia de Havilland, Joan Fontaine, Elizabeth Taylor, and the English woman who won the great American search for Scarlett, Vivien Leigh. And this is to say nothing of the skilled English players in supporting roles (from Roland Young to Sydney Greenstreet, from Sir C. Aubrey Smith to Freddie Bartholomew) or, most striking, the range of American-born players who could do (on screen and off) passable English accents—Adolphe Menjou, Irene Dunne, Myrna Loy, Fredric March, William Powell, Melvyn Douglas, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Franchot Tone, Margaret Sullavan, Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis, Rosalind Russell—and the real Continentals: Garbo, Dietrich, Boyer, Claudette Colbert, Maurice Chevalier, and Ingrid Bergman.

This was an era of dialogue coaches retained by studios, and of elocution classes ordered for the children of Hollywood's nouveau riche. Famously, sound had killed the careers of players with "bad" or "uneducated" voices—which often was a euphemism for class distinction, for voices so coarse or so common they let down the aspirations of Hollywood. For there was a mixture of Anglophilia and anti-Semitism (often in Jewish families) that made Englishness very desirable.

That was one strand. There were also true American voices that came with sound, people such as Cagney, Joan Crawford, Jean Harlow, Gable, Tracy, Groucho, and Stanwyck (though she could do English very well, as witness *The Lady Eve*). Still, I believe that the prestige of correct English voices, and the feeling that they could best handle words with smooth speed, is essential to the films under consideration in DiBattista's book. And this principle, in turn, may help us to understand why the flame of passionate comedy of language and manners died away when American movies became more open to those unburdened by education.

THERE WAS ALSO a certain English sportiveness—and this leads me to dispute DiBattista's satisfied view of *His Girl Friday*. She likes that film a lot, and regards it as the epitome of "Female Rampant." I like it even more, but I think that it is a metaphor for Hollywood's great game, a kind of playfulness preferred by grown-up boys. In *His Girl Friday* (which was Hawks's cunning switch on the Hecht-MacArthur play *The Front Page*), Walter (Cary Grant), a newspaper editor, and Hildy (Rosalind Russell), his ace writer, are divorced. She comes to the paper's office to make her final farewell and to introduce her husband-to-be, Bruce (Ralph Bellamy). Whereupon Walter sets in motion an intrigue (played to maybe the fastest sustained dialogue ever filmed) that will reveal to Hildy that newspapers are her life, while Bruce is a bore.

This film has been known as one of the comedies of re-marriage, a term set out fully by Stanley Cavell in his fine book. It was Cavell's belief, or hope, and one largely shared by DiBattista, that the action helps to re-educate both man and woman into a fit state for true marriage. I see it rather as a game played for the benefit of a society gone wild on promiscuity and divorce. The newsroom is a metaphor for the cockpit of Hollywood—pitilessly professional, yet as addictive as the stage. Walter and Hildy, while being far too cool and sophisticated (too English) to spell it out, have cottoned to the notion that the high fun in life and love is in the wooing. Marriage is so dull: you will have noted how seldom Hollywood actually covered it, then and now. So Walter and Hildy play the dangerous game of breaking up, so that they can find each other again and fall in love. Falling, you see, is the rapture and the rush that Hollywood believed in.

No point is more acute in arguing this case than the sheer, amiable impossibility of Ralph Bellamy as the new husband. Indeed, Bellamy had taken a similarly forlorn role in *The Awful Truth*, and Bruce is dismissed (crushed even) by Walter early in this movie because he looks like that chap in the movies, Ralph Bellamy. Does DiBattista really credit that Hildy has fallen in love with this stiff? (The whole idea that a man—decent, upright, and not ugly—should be a stiff, out of his class, a no-hoper, is very English.) For the very reasons that DiBattista likes Hildy—her smarts, her quickness, her talk, her life—it is plain that she could not endure the placid Bruce. She has found him, the type of types, to set the game in motion, the way you pick up a ball. And like a ball Bruce is to be batted around by expert players. Hildy surely knows this. Why else does she go the office at the eleventh hour to introduce him? A woman intent on a new life wouldn't do that.

But films are not life and not quite art (though these come closer than Hollywood ever managed). They are, I believe, a kind of rule book for Hollywood aristocracy, one dominated by lecherous, manipulative men, so often divorced that they were spurred on to find some justification. So "the comedies of re-marriage" may serve as their fig leaf, but the term should not mask the full genius and rascal superiority of those adorable movies. Like croquet, fast talk—and good talk—are killer sports that have gone out of fashion. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Good to Go-Go

BY GEORGE W. BUSH'S PROclamation, June will forever officially be Black Music Month. And while many of my fellow liberals will doubtless dismiss this as an empty gesture, we should set aside our cynicism and marvel at this fact: Someone at the White House is an exceptional connoisseur of black music. Not only did Bush recognize the role black musicians have played in developing almost every major genre of American music but, as part of the month's festivities, he brought to the White House one of the unappreciated geniuses of our time: the soul of the Soul Searchers, the Gauguin of go-go, the great Chuck Brown.

IF TNR'S DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEYS ARE accurate, you are probably uninitiated in the wonders of go-go. So an introduction is in order. Go-go is a hybrid of funk and hip-hop that sprung out of dance halls in the late '70s. It sounds a little like a cross between James Brown and LL Cool J, but with a few distinctive features. For one thing, each and every go-go composition includes the same syncopated go-go beat, which borrows heavily from Latin music—especially mambo—and goes something like: boom, bahm, boom, boom-BAH-boom. And, unlike hip-hop, which consists of shamelessly shoplifted samples of other artists' beats and melodies, go-go is played exclusively live by incessantly improvising musicians. (Like the Grateful Dead, Chuck Brown can stretch out a single song over an hour with his virtuoso guitar solos and clever freestyle lyrics.) The legendary go-go bands—Rare Essence, Junk Yard, Trouble Funk—resemble small armies, each boasting at least three percussionists (drums, congas, cowbells) and multiple singers.

THERE'S ONE OTHER, ABSOLUTELY critical component of the music: It thrives only within the confines of Washington, D.C. In fact, the story of go-go is the story of Washington—at least of Marion Barry's Washington. Just as Mussolini constructed soccer stadiums to boost popular support for fascism, Barry tethered himself to go-go. Assembling his political machine in the early '80s, Barry poured money into "youth employment." East of the Potomac, in Anacostia, he spent lavishly on music programs at recreation centers, essentially handing instruments and jobs to aspiring go-goists. As go-go grew wildly popular, he embraced the fad more explicitly, even occasionally appearing at shows himself. At one especially famous Chuck Brown concert, part of the Go-Go Drug Free Project, Barry took the stage to belt out the following:

> I'm Marion Barry and here's my rap
> I won't tolerate drugs in the nation's cap. . . .
> Take it from the Mayor of Washington
> Being drug-free won't spoil your fun.

FOR REASONS NOW ALL TOO APPARent, the mayor had trouble reciting those lines coherently. But the go-go revolution moved forward all the same. Indeed, for a time, go-go seemed as if it would be Washington's greatest gift to music since Duke Ellington. In 1985 Island Records, the label that brought reggae to the mainland, vowed it would take go-go "global." It signed the top bands, among them Trouble Funk, to lucrative contracts. To roll out their go-go initiative, Island even produced a feature-length agitprop docudrama, *Good to Go*. The promotional campaign worked wonders. For his 1988 movie *School Daze*, Spike Lee gave screen time to Experience Unlimited (E.U.), whose anthem "Da' Butt" rapidly ascended the charts.

BUT ANYONE WHO SAW *GOOD TO GO* knew that the go-go was good to go bad. The film treated the music as merely a soundtrack, focusing instead on the violent ethos of Washington's drug-riddled clubs. As in California, birthplace of gangsta rap, the spread of crack across Washington had turned go-go culture violent, as the crews attending shows committed some of the most heinous crimes of the late '80s homicide boom. At a 1987 show in the U Street Masonic Temple, eleven people were shot. One club on Georgia Avenue came to be known as the Black Hole: People went in, but they didn't come out.

WHY DIDN'T GO-GO GO GLOBAL AS Island Records had predicted? In the early '90s, when we were in high school, my friends and I debated the issue with great intensity. One school of thought held that the record companies had set impossibly high expectations while recording some of the schlockiest tracks in the genre's history. Another group argued that racists were keeping Chocolate City down, in much the same way they denied us a voting representative in Congress. ("The way go-go is treated by the music industry is how black folks have been treated by the power structure," the radio personality Cathy Hughes proclaimed in the documentary *Straight Up Go-Go*.) Still others argued that the music was only good live; a studio couldn't capture its essence.

IN RETROSPECT, THE EXPLANATION is far simpler—and sadder. Go-go, once joyous escapism, had become truly frightening. Many club owners, tired of the body bags, stopped hosting go-gos. The clubs that still hosted go-gos instituted security measures that would embarrass the Mossad, like requiring patrons to remove their shoes so the soles could be checked for hidden compartments. To pay their bills, legendary bands began performing for white kids like me at Sidwell Friends, National Cathedral School, and other private schools in Upper Northwest D.C. Bands like E.U. simply folded.

IN A SENSE, GO-GO IS A PERFECT metaphor for Washington. On one hand, it's remarkable: a sui generis, wholly original art form that has its own fascinating micro-economy of retailers, record labels, and clubs. It's the answer to simple-minded New York snobbery, which holds that our city on the Potomac is a cultural netherworld that produces nothing but politics. On the other hand, go-go has greater ambitions that it seems destined never to fulfill. It will always be somewhat underappreciated, somewhat provincial—or, in the parlance of black Washington, somewhat 'Bama.

BUT THERE'S ALWAYS HOPE. IN FACT, we're in the midst of a go-go revival. Having buried the late '80s gangsta era, go-go is now basking in a warm nostalgia for the late '70s. Even *The Washington Post* reports that, these days, clubs overflow—not with crews of gangbangers but with klatches of thirtysomething professionals flocking to "Old School" Saturdays. The great group Rare Essence has just released a new album called *Doin' It Old School Style*. There's even a recently published history of the genre, *The Beat: Go-Go's Fusion of Funk and Hip-Hop*, co-written by a George Washington University musicologist. But it's Bush's proclamation—and his homage to Chuck Brown—that cinches it. Like Barry, Bush has assimilated a classic axiom of Washington: Good go-go is good politics.

FRANKLIN FOER

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BAEO Answers Your School Choice Questions

Kaleem Caire, president and CEO of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), recently hosted a live online forum about school choice at WashingtonPost.com.

The 90-minute forum generated questions from throughout the country. For a transcript, go to **www.schoolChoiceInfo.org/hot_topics/?ID=5**. Here is a sampling of questions and Caire's answers.

Washington, D.C.: You say that it's a matter of choice, but don't the schools have most of the power to do the choosing? How can you say vouchers help poor and minority students if these schools can discriminate?

Caire: In Milwaukee's Parental Choice Program, students are admitted to the program through an open lottery. State law also prohibits participating private schools from discriminating on the basis of disability or race/ethnicity. This system of laws and regulations prevents private "choice" schools from picking and choosing students. Similar laws govern the Cleveland and Florida voucher programs.

Tulsa, OK: Most public school educators take the position that they need more funding per student and smaller class sizes. How would voucher programs affect public schools in those two areas?

Caire: Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) spending grew three times faster than enrollment during the first decade of the Milwaukee voucher program. According to MPS, if the 10,000 students now using vouchers went back to MPS, the school district would have to find an additional $70 million in operating funds. In addition, MPS would need to borrow $70 million more or abandon its class size reduction program.

Parental School Choice is Widespread — Unless You're Poor.

Washington, D.C.: I realize that you work for a black organization, but why don't you run ads for school choice that focus on white, Latino, or Asian students? Low-income families can be of any race.

Caire: As an organization, we have struggled to address this issue. BAEO does not believe that Black children should be the only benefactors of choice programs, but we do understand that far too many Black children are failing educationally. So we made a conscious effort to stand up for our children, but do so in ways that other children will also benefit. That is why we focus on low-income families, a status that applies to many more children than just African Americans.

Visitors to SchoolChoiceInfo.org are always welcome to submit school choice questions at http://www.schoolchoiceinfo.org/contact/.

baeo
Black Alliance for Educational Options

For more information go to: www.schoolchoiceinfo.org

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The Eagle, the Elk and the Warrior

One day, a Cheyenne warrior was hunting alone, on foot. He came upon an elk lying dead by the side of a stream. Trapped in the antlers of the fallen elk was a large spotted eagle. The eagle spoke to the hunter.

"Free me from here," the eagle said, "and I will give you a gift."

The warrior did as the eagle requested. He lifted the elk's antlers and the eagle was free. As the great bird flew away, it said to the warrior, "Go over that next hill and you will see your gift." Then the bird was gone.

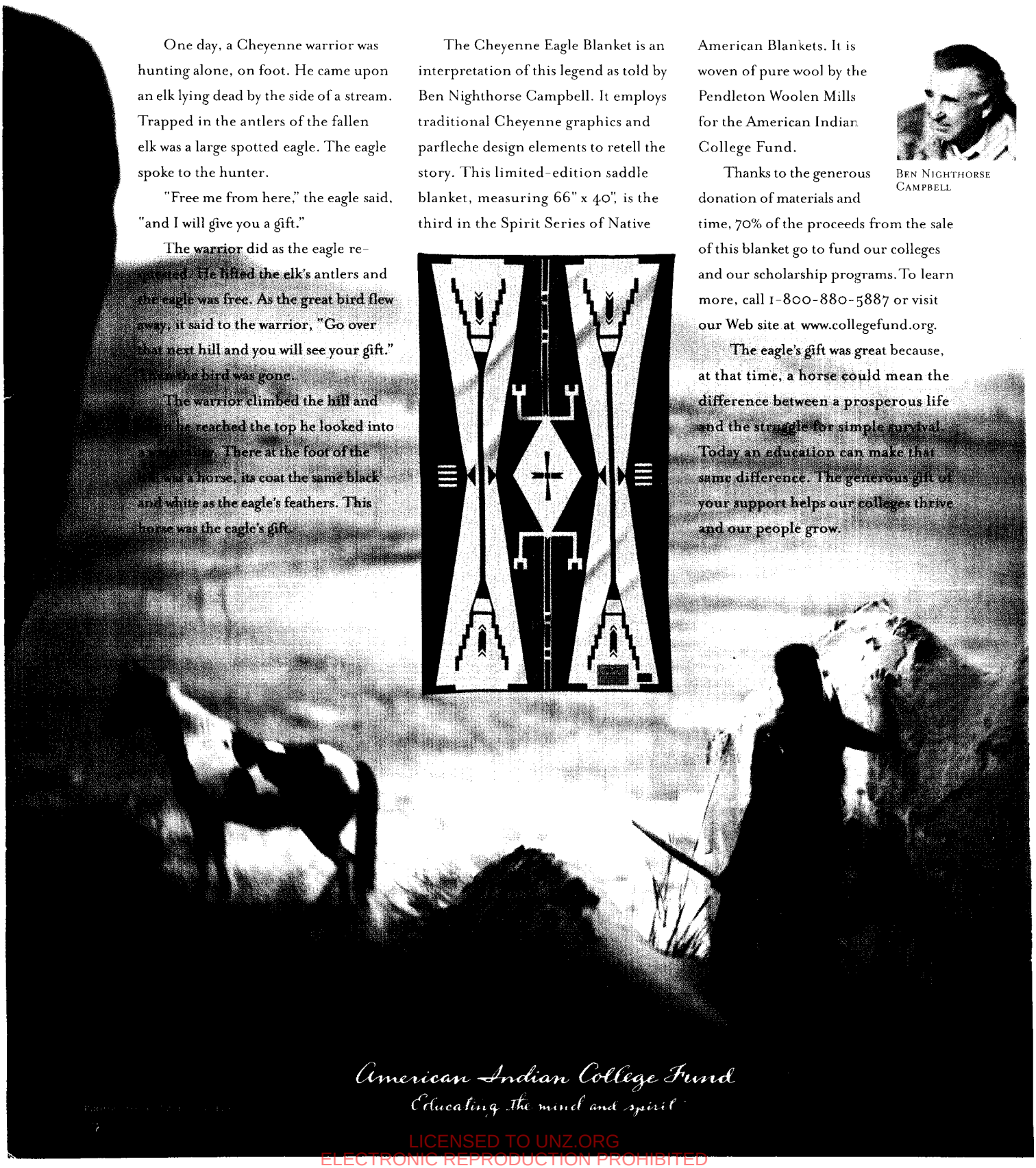
The warrior climbed the hill and when he reached the top he looked into a valley. There at the foot of the hill was a horse, its coat the same black and white as the eagle's feathers. This horse was the eagle's gift.

The Cheyenne Eagle Blanket is an interpretation of this legend as told by Ben Nighthorse Campbell. It employs traditional Cheyenne graphics and parfleche design elements to retell the story. This limited-edition saddle blanket, measuring 66" x 40", is the third in the Spirit Series of Native American Blankets. It is woven of pure wool by the Pendleton Woolen Mills for the American Indian College Fund.

Ben Nighthorse Campbell

Thanks to the generous donation of materials and time, 70% of the proceeds from the sale of this blanket go to fund our colleges and our scholarship programs. To learn more, call 1-800-880-5887 or visit our Web site at www.collegefund.org.

The eagle's gift was great because, at that time, a horse could mean the difference between a prosperous life and the struggle for simple survival. Today an education can make that same difference. The generous gift of your support helps our colleges thrive and our people grow.



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